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MEKEDATU PROJECT

'All parties must fight for it unitedly'

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Ministry concerned over lack of donors' data

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JNU ELECTION

United Left Panel wins three posts, BAPSA one

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The need to have person-centred solutions

There must be a paradigm shift

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BRAGGING RIGHTS

Titans prevail over Mumbai Indians

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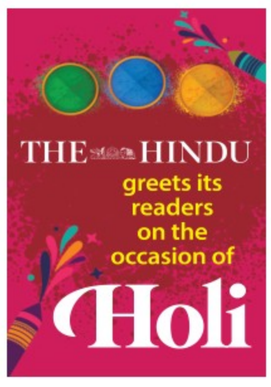
NEARBY

Janardhana Reddy set to rejoin BJP today

BENGALURU
Kalyana Karnataka Pragathi Paksha MLA and controversial mining baron G. Janardhana Reddy announced his decision to rejoin the BJP on Monday. He was earlier associated with the BJP for over 10 years. » PAGE 4



EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 7

INDIA bloc to hold rally against Kejriwal's arrest

Opposition parties to stage a 'maha rally' to safeguard the country's interests at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on March 31; top leaders to participate; Delhi Chief Minister issues work order from jail

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Rallying behind the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Opposition INDIA bloc will hold a public event at the Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on March 31 to protest against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in the excise policy case.

The rally is to "safeguard the country's interests and democracy", the Delhi leadership of the AAP and the Congress announced at a joint press conference in the national capital on Sunday.

"We will hold a 'maha rally' at Ramlila Maidan on March 31 against what is happening in the country. The top leadership of the INDIA bloc will participate in the event," said Gopal Rai, the AAP's Delhi convener, who shared the stage with Delhi Ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj, as well as Delhi Congress president Arvinder Singh Lovely and other senior leaders.

In solidarity: AAP and Congress leaders during a press conference of the INDIA bloc in New Delhi on Sunday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

"The bank accounts of the oldest party of the country were sealed so that they could not even campaign for the Lok Sabha elections," Mr. Rai said, referring to the Income Tax Department's action against the Congress.

The AAP has also alleged that its headquarters on Deendayal Upadhyay Marg and Mr. Kejriwal's residence were all blockaded by the Delhi Police. "They turned Delhi into a fortress. Elected MLAs and Ministers were detained when they were protesting. Kejriwal's family was placed under house arrest. They sealed our party office. Yesterday [Saturday], at Shaheedi Park, they behaved with us as if we were criminals," Mr. Rai said.

Clear intent

Mr. Kejriwal on Sunday issued his first order after being in judicial custody, showing his intent to stay on as Chief Minister despite the arrest. He directed his government to make arrangements for water tankers to cope with the summer shortages in the city.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

BJP chooses Kageri over Hegde for Uttara Kannada LS seat

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Raja Amareshwar Naik, K. Sudhakar, Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri, and Jagadish Shettar

Continuing its experiment of changing some of its incumbent MPs with new faces, the BJP has ignored former Union Minister and MP for Uttara Kannada, Anantkumar Hegde, who has been embarrassing the party through controversial remarks, for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls and fielded former Assembly Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri in his place.

The party announced its second list of candidates for Karnataka on Sunday for four constituencies.

It may be noted that Mr. Hegde had referred to the intentions to change the Constitution multiple times and embarrassed the party.

Mr. Kageri had lost the 2023 Assembly elections from Sirsi.

As announced by party veteran leader B.S. Yediyurappa, the party has fielded former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar from Belagavi, which is presently being represented by Mangala Suresh Angadi, a relative of Mr. Shettar.

Mr. Shettar, who rejoined the BJP after a brief stint with the Congress, was initially reluctant to shift from his home district of Dharwad to Belagavi as some sections in Belagavi had resorted to a "go back Shettar campaign."

Similarly, the BJP has fielded former Minister K. Sudhakar, who had lost the Assembly elections, from Chickballapur. Incumbent MP B.N. Bache Gowda had already disassociated himself from the BJP and formally quit the party a few days ago. The party has renominated Raja Amareshwar Naik from Raichur.

Interestingly, the BJP has continued the suspense with respect to the political future of Union Minister of State A. Narayanaswamy, who represents Chitradurga in the Lok Sabha seat, as the candidate for this seat is yet to be announced.

With the announcement of candidates for four more seats on Sunday, the BJP has completed the process of selection of candidates for all the Lok Sabha seats, barring one in Karnataka.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 4

Assam Police detain IIT-Guwahati student for pledge to join IS

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Assam Police have detained a student of the Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) after he had allegedly slipped out to join the Islamic State (IS) terror group.

The fourth-year student from Okhla in Delhi had pledged support to the IS through emails and social media posts and said he planned to join the terror group. He disappeared from the IIT-G campus soon after his posts went viral.

The police caught him on Saturday evening in Hajo, about 30 km northwest of Guwahati.

"Reference @IITGuwahati student pledging allegiance to ISIS – the said student has been detained while travelling and further lawful follow up would take place," Assam's Director-General of Police Gyanendra Pratap Singh wrote on X at Saturday midnight.

The police investigated the authenticity of the student's email and social media handles.

The detention of the student followed the arrest of IS India head Haris Farooqi and his associate Anurag Singh on March 19. The State police's Special Task Force caught the duo after they had crossed into Dhubri district of Assam from Bangladesh.

A day of delight

Festive mood fills the air as revellers celebrate Holi at Mandi in Himachal Pradesh on the eve of the festival. PTI

Kangana, Arun Govil in BJP fifth list for LS polls; Varun dropped

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Kangana Ranaut

Bollywood star Kangana Ranaut and television actor Arun Govil, who starred in the Ramayan series, are among the names in the BJP's fifth list of 111 candidates from 17 States for the Lok Sabha election, released on Sunday.

Ms. Ranaut will contest from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, while Mr. Govil will contest from Meerut.

The party has fielded former Union Minister Maneka Gandhi from Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh, but has dropped her son Varun Gandhi from Pilibhit.

He was replaced by Uttar Pradesh Minister Jitin Prasada.

In Kerala, the party has fielded State unit chief K. Surendran against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from Wayanad.

In all, the BJP has declared candidates for 400 seats in five lists so far.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

In a first, over ₹1 lakh fine imposed in 21 cases for misuse of potable water

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a first, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has fined people for using Cauvery and borewell water for non-essential purposes.

The violators are being fined on a campaign mode to save water at a time of an acute water crisis in the city.

According to data shared by the BWSSB, it has levied a total of ₹1,05,000 in 21 cases in seven different divisions.

The highest number of cases, 12, was filed in South East 1 division, while three cases were registered in South West 2 division. From South East 1 division alone, ₹60,000 fine amount was collected by the BWSSB.

Ram Prasath Manohar

The highest number of cases, 12, was filed in South East 1 division, while three cases were registered in South West 2 division

BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar, talking to *The Hindu*, said: "We have taken up this on a war footing as the city is reeling under an acute water crisis. We are implementing the rules on a campaign mode and in the coming days, more cases will be registered."

According to officials, among the violators, many were found using water for washing cars and in the garden.

Keeping tabs

Commercial establishments and industries will also come under the scanner for the use of water for non-essential purposes in the future, said officials, adding that watermen are keeping a tab every day in their respective areas for violations and have been given stern instructions to be on high vigil.

Sandeep Anirudhan, Convener, Citizens' Agenda for Bengaluru said this rule has been there from many years but BWSSB had failed to implement it.

"Now, when the city is under stress for the want of water, the board is strictly implementing the same. This should continue even when there is no water scarcity to stop this practice," he added.

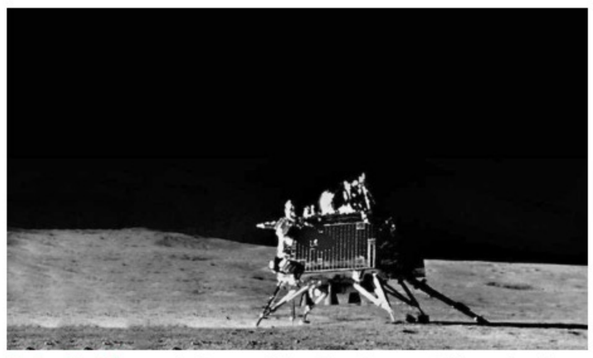
It's official: 'Statio Shiv Shakti' approved as name of Chandrayaan-3 landing site

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) working group for Planetary System Nomenclature has approved the name "Statio Shiv Shakti" for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander. The approval was given on March 19.

Planetary nomenclature, like terrestrial nomenclature, is used to uniquely identify a feature on the surface of a planet or satellite so that it can be easily located, described, and discussed.

The Gazetteer of Planetary Nomenclature "contains detailed information about all names of topographic and albedo features on planets and satellites [and some planetary ring and ring-gap systems] that the IAU has named and approved from its founding in 1919 through the present time".



Etched in history: An image of the Chandrayaan-3 Vikram lander clicked by a navigation camera onboard the Pragyan rover. ISRO

The IAU is the internationally recognised authority for assigning names to planetary surface features. It follows some rules and conventions to do so.

The IAU's Rule 9 states: "No names having political, military or religious significance may be used, except for names of political figures prior to the 19th century." The citation in the gazetteer for the name of the landing site of the Vikram lander reads: "Compound word from Indian mythology that depicts the masculine ["Shiva"] and feminine ["Shakti"] duality of nature."

On August 26, 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the point where the moon lander of Chandrayaan-3 touched down would be called "Shiv Shakti".

"In Shiv, there is a resolution for the welfare of humanity and Shakti gives us the strength to fulfil those resolutions," Mr. Modi had said while announcing the name.

Libero Anand — a game-changer with exceptional digs

The Delhi Toofans player, who feels the role has not been really acknowledged, says things are slowly changing with the advent of the PVL; the 21-year-old makes the crowd involve itself in the game through his remarkable retrieving ability and uninhibited celebration

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

K. Keerthivasan

Volleyball is a sport full of gigantic players whose average height is six feet and seven inches. Invariably, the shorter players remain under-appreciated. Generally, it's the attackers and blockers who receive all the attention, accolades and rewards.

Of the six players in a team, there is one with a different jersey colour than the rest of his teammates, and he/ she is referred as libero, who is the second line of defence against the attackers of the opposition.

Their key roles are receiving serve, digging attacks, and making passes from the second row to set up the team's offence.

However in India, liberos have remained in the shadows and have not been given due credit.

K. Anand, the libero of Delhi Toofans in the recently concluded Prime Volleyball League (PVL) in Chennai, has been an exception to the rule. Toofans lost to Calicut Heroes in the final. In fact, it was a great performance given that it was the team's debut in the PVL.

The 21-year-old from Kerala has been a game-changer with his exceptional digs. His acts of jumping high and celebrating a point made the crowd involved with the game. To put it short, he was the livewire of Toofans.

In fact, after seeing one of his diving photos and of Anand's on twitter, former South African cricketer Jonty Rhodes wrote: "At least you (Anand) managed to get into the same frame as the ball – I need to work on my reach!"

K. Sai Prakash, CEO, Toofans, lavished praise on Anand. "He has been the darling of our team and the crowd when it comes to performances. He is the only libero in this edition so far to be given the Game-changer of the Match Award. He creates a lot of energy in the team and remains a great asset. I hope to see him as truly an International professional. With PVL gaining popularity, I hope Anand realises one of his dreams of becoming a professional who can play in foreign leagues. I hope the Indian sports system helps him in his quest."

Born in the volleyball-crazy Kannur, Anand started in Class VIII, when he played with seniors. It was in Thrissur that his role of becoming a libero was established. His coach Shivakumar changed his position from that of a setter/ attacker to libero when he was in Class XI and there has been no looking back. At the SAI Centre in Kozhikode, Anand's journey as a proper volleyballer began.

He represented the Kerala sub-junior, junior and senior teams in the National Championships. Anand strongly believes the sport has not really acknowledged the role of liberos but it is slowly changing with the advent of PVL.

"Liberos are not valued enough because they are not getting points. But in modern volleyball, we have many important roles like reception and defence. When an opponent serves – going all out while doing it – it becomes difficult to receive the ball. Liberos do it. That's one of the main points of defence. PVL is changing the perception of libero," he said.

Liberos are generally agile, athletic and alert, and according to Anand, they need courage to showcase their talent. "We need courage to dig the balls, The mindset is important. We need courage to save the team. If the ball is going far from us, we need the courage to dive," he said.

His celebration of jumping high and pumping his fist when his team wins a point is a delight to watch. Anand said it is his style and he celebrates it in the same way when he or his team wins a point.

"I do it if anyone from my team wins a point. I just need to celebrate. In my mind, I always think I have to take my point and you need to celebrate every point," said Anand, a huge fan of French libero Jenia Grebennikov.

Learning from foreigners

This is his third season in the PVL. Having featured in the previous two editions for Hyderabad Black Hawks, Anand is revelling in his role for Toofans. He said he has learnt a lot from the foreigners in the league.

"The league has helped me become a professional as the foreigners have taught me many things, especially, Lazar Dodic (Serbia) and Daniel Aponza (Colombia). They tell me how to 'dig' and the art of movements."

Anand emphasised that there is a lot of difference between the playing styles of India and Europe. In foreign leagues, attackers have power and precision while the liberos' defence is top-class, which forces one to be at his best all the time.

"However, we need to change many things to get better and PVL is the right step in that direction," said Anand.

It's not just the fans and Toofans teammates who have appreciated Anand. Mumbai Metors' libero Hector Mata of Venezuela is all praise for the youngster.

"Hector said I am doing good and have all the qualities to play in foreign leagues. That means a lot coming from a foreigner of a rival club," said Anand.

He, however, has an unfinished dream. "I want to be in the National senior team. That's my dream. I was in the National camp last year but was not selected and I hope to be named in the coming years," he said.

THE GIST

- Liberos are generally agile, athletic and alert, and according to Anand, they need courage to showcase their talent
- Anand's dream is to break into the Indian senior team
- After seeing one of his diving photos and of Anand's on twitter, former South African cricketer Jonty Rhodes wrote: "At least you (Anand) managed to get into the same frame as the ball — I need to work on my reach!

Three-month moratorium on new borewells in areas served by Cauvery

Only government buildings are exempt from this. However, residents complain that new borewells continued to be drilled unabated even in core city areas; firms say they are not aware of such a ban

WATER WOES

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has imposed a moratorium on drilling new borewells in areas served by the Cauvery water till May-end. However, residents complain that despite the temporary ban, drilling of new borewells continues unabated in the core city areas.

A copy of the circular issued on February 29 to all BWSSB engineers across the city by the Chief Engineer, BWSSB, who is also the Chairman of the BBMP sub-committee of Karnataka Groundwater Development Authority, is available with *The Hindu*.

Taking permission to dig borewells was made mandatory from March 15 and the BWSSB launched an app "Antarjala" for the same purpose. FILE PHOTO

According to the circular, it was decided to not even take applications for new borewells in areas served by the Cauvery water till May and only exempted government buildings from this moratorium. The decision was taken to prevent further depletion of groundwater levels, the circular said.

However, many complain that new borewells continue to be drilled even in areas served by the Cauvery water and the enforcement of the moratorium has been lax.

"Despite a ban on new borewells in the core city areas for three months, we have had cases where influential people have dug new borewells even a few days ago in Indiranagar and we have raised complaints with the Karnataka Groundwater Development Authority and even the Minister of Minor Irrigation," said Sneha Nandihal, a resident of Indiranagar.

At least three borewell-drilling firms that *The Hindu* spoke to on Saturday said they were not aware of such a ban on digging new borewells in the core city areas.

"The demand for new borewells is huge. Though most of them are being dug on the outskirts of the city, many are also being dug in the core city areas. Nobody is aware of such a ban," said a borewell contractor.

"We have decided to give priority to new borewells in the outer zones where we do not supply water and discourage digging of new borewells in the core city areas," said V. Ramprasath Manohar, Chairman, BWSSB, adding that the board would act on any complaint of norm violations and drilling of illegal borewells.

However, sources said that the BWSSB has little manpower to enforce such a rule on the ground, even as it is firefighting the drinking water crisis. "There is no practical way on the ground to check illegal borewells and this has been the case for years now," a senior official conceded.

The BWSSB made taking permission to dig borewells mandatory from March 15 and launched an app "Antarjala" for the same purpose.

The app has seen 49 applications till date, sources said.

Hyacinth blocking Cauvery water channel removed

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The BWSSB says the city would have faced a water shortage of 1,000 MLD if the plants were not removed. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) workers on Saturday night and Sunday morning removed hyacinth partially blocking the water flow in a channel.

As soon as the BWSSB learned that the plants were cutting the flow of water by half, a team was formed under the direction of the chairman of the board. If left unattended, the city would have faced water shortage to the tune of 1,000 MLD, said a BWSSB release.

According to the release, the team worked from 10 p.m. on Saturday to 2 a.m. on Sunday using an earthmover. The workers removed the hyacinth that entered the water channel owing to winds.

As much of the plants were removed, the shortage of water was reduced to 100 MLD.

Owing to this shortage, a few areas experienced water disruption and tankers were used to supply water. However, in most of the areas the water supply continued as usual, the release added.

Listing out other measures taken to handle the water crisis, the BWSSB said it is also supplying 1 lakh litres of water for free to areas with the highest population density.

The BWSSB in a press release said at Ambedkar Slum, there are about 1,088 homes and the board has placed 22 tanks and water is being filled twice a day.

The BWSSB is also filling Kengeri lake with treated water from the sewage treatment plants (STP) located at Vrushabhavathy valley, Nayandahalli lake, and Kengeri.

On the other hand, the work to fill water to Dabasipalya, Hosakerehalli, and Halagewaderahalli lakes are under way. This is being done as a measure to recharge groundwater.

Ram Prasath Manohar, BWSSB Chairman after inspecting the work said apart from Kengeri lake, 14 lakes will be filled with treated water.

UAS-B organises walkathon

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Department of Horticulture, University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore, GKVK campus, organised a walkathon on Sunday.

Around 200 people participated in the guided tour which took place from 6:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. The participants were escorted to various facilities of the university, such as the Agricultural Technology Information Centre, the Institute of Baking Technology, the Agricultural Science Museum, the Mahatma Gandhi Botanical Garden, the Farm Section, and the Horticulture Department.

The UAS-B stated in a release that the organisation of a guided tour at the medicinal and aromatic plants heritage site, on the GKVK campus, aimed at offering participants exposure to diverse aspects of agriculture and horticulture.

Mahindra Percussion Festival ends on a high note

Praveen Sudevan
BENGALURU

Taufiq Qureshi and team performing at the Mahindra Percussion Festival in Bengaluru on Sunday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Artists of *Ashtanayika - Kal Aur Aaj* performing at the Mahindra Percussion Festival in Bengaluru on Sunday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

The second day of the Mahindra Percussion Festival roared to life at the Prestige Srihari Khoday Center for Performing Arts on Sunday, treating audiences to a whirlwind exploration of percussive styles from across the globe.

The evening began with Rhythms of India, comprising B.C. Manjunath, Darshan Doshi, Varijashree Venugopal, and Praveen Rao. Theirs was a performance showcasing India's musical heritage infused with a contemporary flair.

The opening piece tantalised spectators with a splash of Spanish influence. However, it was Ms. Varijashree who stole the show, seamlessly alternating between vocals and flute in a display sometimes more remarkable than the percussionists themselves. A vocal-percussion duet further highlighted her skills.

The performance continued with a percussion-heavy piece titled 'Rhythms of India', punctuated by a beautiful flute interlude and a dazzling mridangam solo. Further percussion solos showcased the ensemble's virtuosity. The first performance ended with 'Bandish Blues', its staccato bursts giving way to a flowing, melodic exploration.

The festival stage transformed with *Ashtanayika - Kal Aur Aaj*, an avant-garde performance fusing ancient poetry with contemporary music, dance, and rap. It explored the emotional world of the 'Ashtanayika' (eight archetypal heroines) through Sur Das's lyrical poetry, expressive Kuchipudi dance, and the raw power of rap.

Viveick Rajagopalan's music formed a rhythmic backdrop of classical Indian sounds and modern jazz, resonating with the nayika's myriad emotions. Aishwarya Meenakshi's Bharatanatyam brought authenticity and depth, while rap artists like Shivangini Yeashu Yuvraj and Ashwini 'Krantinaari' Hiremath and Pratika offered a modern counterpoint. The vibrant energy of traditional tasha and dhol drums completed this immersive experience, a celebration of both heritage and innovation.

The festival culminated with Taufiq Qureshi's *Surya*, an innovative project blending Indian classical music with vibrant energy from jazz, folk, Afro, Latin, and contemporary sounds. Led by the percussion maestro, *Surya*'s focus on improvisation ensured a unique and dynamic performance each time.

Mr. Qureshi was joined by a talented ensemble, including Sarang Kulkarni on the sarod, Abhay Nayampally on the electric guitar, Shikhar Naad Qureshi on the djembe drums, with Kaushiki Joglekar's fingers waltzing over the keyboard.

The first day of the festival saw performances by the Charu Hariharan Quartet featuring Kozhikode Nanthalakootam and artists from the Jenukuruba tribe from Nagarhole; Two Summ featuring Mr. Viveick Rajagopalan and Anantha R. Krishnan; Swarathma featuring Thavil Raja and Beat Guru, and the legendary Vikku Vinayakram with his family.

The Mahindra Percussion Festival, in association with *The Hindu*, is cosponsored by Mahindra Finance, Paul John Visitor Centre and Carlsberg Smooth Soda and promoted and produced by Hyperlink Brand Solutions.

IIBS celebrates Founder's Day

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The International Institute of Business Studies (IIBS), Bengaluru, celebrated its 16th Founder's Day, LUMINANCE 2024, on the birthday of Jay Prakash, Chairman.

The IIBS was started in 2008 and completed 16 years as of 2024.

The programme was inaugurated by Ananda Kumar, Registrar (Evaluation) of Bengaluru City University.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, MAR. 25	
RISE 06:20	SET 18:31
RISE 18:40	SET 06:17
TUESDAY, MAR. 26	
RISE 06:20	SET 18:31
RISE 19:25	SET 06:50
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 27	
RISE 06:19	SET 18:31
RISE 20:11	SET 07:26

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	33	24
Mysuru	34	23
Bengaluru	33	21

Bengaluru Today
33°C A dry weather to continue. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be warm. Night also will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
34°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be warm and uneasy. Night will be pleasant.

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E-paper edition

The Hindu offers more coverage of Bengaluru in the e-paper edition. (epaper.thehindu.com)

In the issue dated March 25, we have a story on how with the industry getting saturated, many young architects are finding openings in the XR space attractive. From schools to museums to houses to cities, architects, for long, have been designing spaces around us. With the world starting to merge seamlessly from the physical to the meta, it seems like they are now in demand to design spaces in the virtual world too.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (March 25, Monday), the following articles are available:

- On the resurgence of mumps in Kerala **bit.ly/mumpskerala**
- Can 'good sounds' help coral islands recover from bleaching? **bit.ly/coralislandsblech**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

Expo ends

People at the 'Living Spaces Property Expo 2024', a two-day annual property exposition, at Chandra Sagar conventional hall in Jayanagar. The event was inaugurated by actor Namratha Gowda on Saturday. SUDHAKARA JAIN

Police-public beat system to be relaunched in city

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

B. Dayananda

The Bengaluru City Police are all set to reintroduce the police-public beat system to contain crimes such as house break-ins, vehicle theft, and robberies .

Speaking at the 'Jana Samparka Sabhe' in Mahalakshmi Layout on Saturday, Bengaluru City Police Commissioner B. Dayananda said that re-introducing the volunteer beat at the local level with public support will not only bridge the gap between the people and the police, but also help contain crimes.

The initiative is already in force in some areas like Vijayanagar and Chandra Layout as a pilot project and will be extended to other parts.

Recalling that the city police have had initiatives like 'Neighbourhood Police' and 'Police Volunteers' earlier, Mr. Dayananda said: "The implementation of a volunteer beat requires public cooperation, so as to solve cases of robbery and burglary at night. There were such initiatives earlier under different names, but were stopped owing to misuse of the initiative."

The jurisdictional police have involved residents of localities to accompany them for the night beat voluntarily to keep their neighborhood safe. The police have created awareness among residents on the dos and don'ts about their safety. Apart from the Hoysala patrolling service, the city police are also roping in 'cheetahs', the two-wheeler patrolling team into service to be first responders and attend to any eventualities.

THE HINDU

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, NANTHAKUMAR SUSHMA, D/o. Nanthakumar T R, R/at Flat No. P102, PNR Serenity Apt, Bang 84 have changed my name from SUKSHMAABINAYA JAYANTHI NANTHAKUMAR to NANTHAKUMAR SUSHMA for all my future purposes by affidavit 21–03–2024 sworn before notary Y R Chandrasekar.

I, ASIF Poothayil Makkar, R/O G7, DSR Cresent, sarjapura Outer Ring Rd, Bellandur, Blr–103, have changed my son name from Safwan Poothayil Asif to Safwan Asif vide afdvt dtd 23/03/24

Road-rage incident: Two injured in row over honking

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Two people sustained stab injuries in a row over honking on the outskirts of the city on Saturday. The Suryanagar police have registered an attempt to murder case against a habitual offender and his five associates in this regard.

According to the police, the incident occurred at Heelalige village near Anekal, when Ankith, a private firm employee, driving home, noticed a minibus honking continuously at a truck moving ahead. Ankith shouted at the driver, which irked Sridhar, who was travelling in the vehicle. A heated argument ensued between the duo, following which Ankith called his friends Sunil and Karthik for help. Sridhar called his associate, also named Karthik, and others who came to the spot, and allegedly stabbed Ankith's friends, Sunil and Karthik, after a fight and escaped.

Sridhar's associate Karthik, according to the police, was a habitual offender released from prison recently.

The injured Sunil and Karthik were rushed to a private hospital for treatment.

The Suryanagar police have taken up a case and efforts are on to track down Karthik and his associates, identified as Sridhar, Vale Manja, Hemanth, Manoj, and Venkata Raju.

Can 'good sounds' help coral islands recover from bleaching?

Many coral islands, like Lakshadweep, are inhabited by people and their destruction will naturally affect the people there. Rising seas due to climate change is another problem: many island countries like Tuvalu and Vanuatu are facing the threat of submergence and have articulated their concerns at international climate conferences

V. Sasi Kumar

Climate change is the most serious environmental problem facing the world today. One of the main reasons for this is the global warming caused by the extraction of coal and oil, which have been underground for millennia, and burning them for industrial and non-industrial purposes to generate energy. The effects of these activities were exacerbated by other causes of global warming, such as deforestation.

Global warming has many consequences, including rising sea levels and changes in the frequency of extreme weather. Another is the destruction of coral reefs. India's Lakshadweep islands for instance are islands formed on such reefs.

Coral reefs have started to die

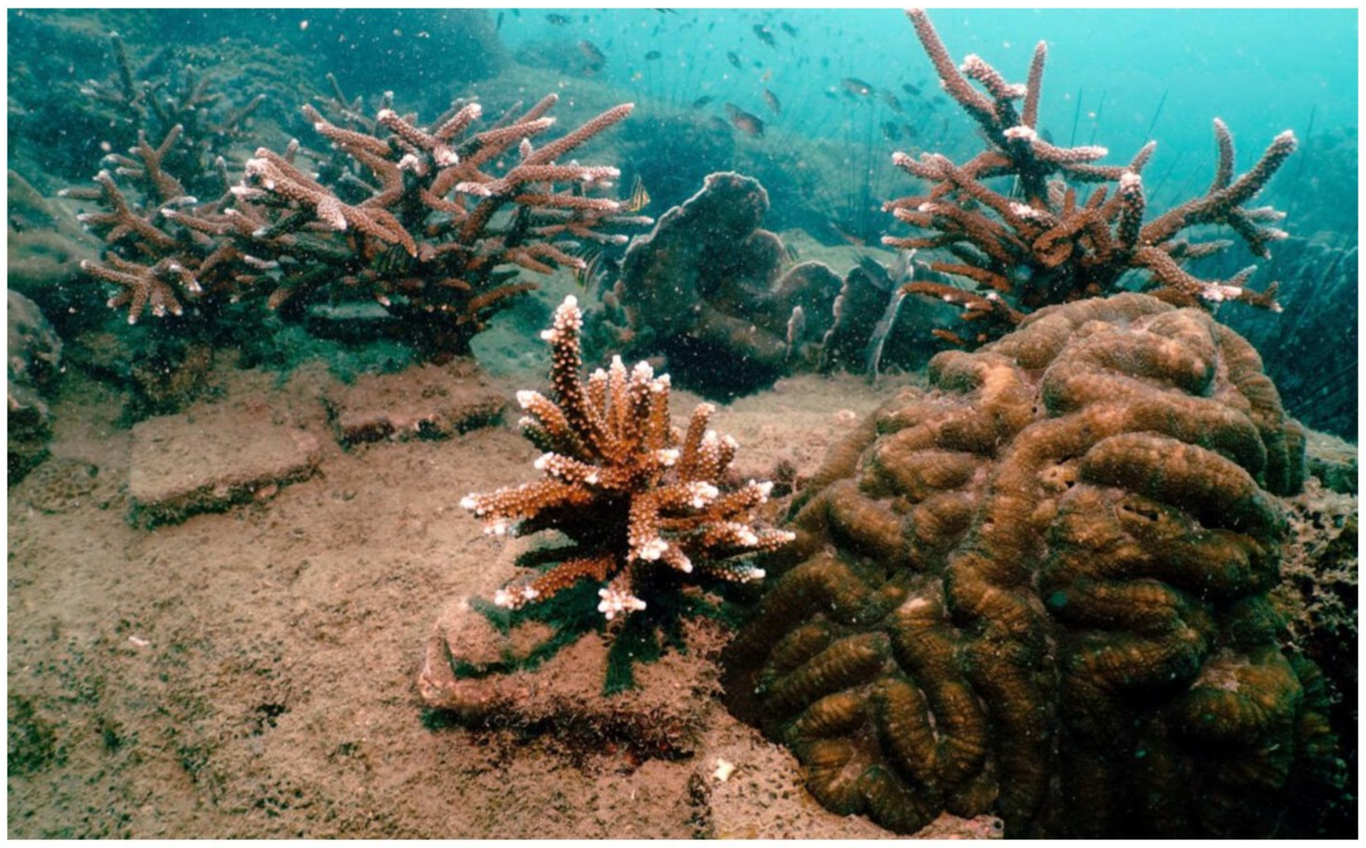
Coral reefs are built by a type of organism that, when it accumulates, forms reefs and islands. They live in large colonies. Corals have a symbiotic relationship with microscopic algae called zooxanthellae, which live in the corals' tissues. Life becomes tough when the temperature of the water around them rises. When it does, the corals expel the zooxanthellae. An important visual symptom of these effects is that the colour of the coral reef changes, and subsequently they die off in droves. This event is called bleaching.

However, not all coral bleaching events are due to warm water. Ocean acidification - which is when the pH of the water drops as more carbon dioxide dissolves in it - is another well-known cause. More acidic water reduces the availability of calcium minerals that the corals need to build and repair their exoskeletons.

In many parts of the world, coral reefs have started to die due to global warming experienced over the years. The U.S. lost half of its coral reefs in the Caribbean in one year in 2005 due to a large-scale bleaching event after warm waters around the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico expanded southward. When scientists collated satellite data of the region from the previous 20 years, they were able to confirm that the 2005 event exerted more thermal stress than those in the previous 20 years combined.

A source of hope

The Great Barrier Reef in Australia is the largest coral reef in the world. Recently many people there protested strongly against a plan to open a new coal mine because they were worried about the survival of the reef - not because the mine would directly affect the reef but because of the effects of burning fossil fuels at large.



Staghorn corals seen in the waters off Man Nai Island, near Rayong province, Thailand in February. REUTERS

Many coral islands like our Lakshadweep are inhabited by people. The destruction of these coral reefs will naturally affect the people there. A rising sea level due to climate change is another problem for them. Many small island countries like Tuvalu and Vanuatu are facing the threat of submergence and have articulated their concerns at international climate conferences. Their submergence is a certainty now; the only question is when it will happen. Therefore, it is very scary that the coral reefs themselves are being destroyed and, axiomatically, any chance of saving the corals can and does become a source of hope.

It is against this background that about 5,000 scientists gathered in New Orleans, in the U.S., in February this year for the American Geophysical Union's biennial 'Ocean Sciences' meeting. Here, Amy Apprill, a scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts and who studies coral reefs, provided information about a study she had been part of.

The coral polyps

To understand this study, we need to first understand what a coral reef is. Coral reefs are built by an organism called a polyp. A coral group is a colony of a large number of genetically identical polyps. Each polyp is a sac-like animal, usually a few millimeters wide and a few centimeters tall. It has a set of tentacles surrounding a mouth-like opening. Polyps are gregarious: they like to socialise.

> Global warming has many consequences, including rising sea levels and changes in the frequency of extreme weather. Another is the destruction of coral reefs

Every polyp also sheds an exoskeleton at its bottom and over many generations this discarded substance accumulates to form a large structure up to several metres wide. The polyps organise their lives around this structure. A coral reef is formed when a large number of polyps collects in this way. Polyps use sound to communicate with each other. Naturally, the sound of a healthy colony will differ from that of an unhealthy colony. Dr. Apprill and her team used this distinction in their new study.

The sound of a health colony

The investigators set about examining whether a degraded reef could be enriched by replaying healthy reef sounds. They conducted a series of field studies in the Virgin Islands of the U.S., where they quantified the settlement rates of three species of corals with two different breeding strategies.

They found that in degraded coral reefs, the settlement rate increased when such sounds were played (using a novel underwater speaker system). They also reported that the settlement rate was higher closer to the speaker and reduced as one moved away from the speaker, indicating the impact of the sounds played.

Finally, it would be a mistake to think the researchers have solved the reef settlement problem posed by climate change. Their study was just an experiment. If what they did is tested repeatedly and at least a good fraction of instances are successful, then we can decide that their technique can help in practice. But we still don't know what problems might arise when this project is implemented on a large scale to save coral reefs. We also need to find out the volume at which the sound has to be played and if there are any other parameters to be controlled.

In sum, the new study is just a pointer, even if also a positive one.

(V. Sasi Kumar is a scientist formerly at the Centre for Earth Science Studies, Thiruvananthapuram.)

THE GIST

Corals have a symbiotic relationship with algae called zooxanthellae. When the temperature of water rises, corals expel zooxanthellae. An important visual symptom of these effects is that the colour of the coral reef changes, and they die off. This event is called bleaching

Coral reefs are dying due to warming. The U.S. lost half its reefs in the Caribbean in one year in 2005 due to a large-scale bleaching event. When data of the region was collated, it confirmed that the 2005 event exerted more thermal stress than those in the previous 20 years combined

In degraded coral reefs, settlement rate increased when healthy reef sounds were played. The settlement rate was higher closer to the speaker and reduced as one moved away from the speaker, indicating the impact of the sounds played

BIG SHOT

The Poza de la Becerra, a geological anomaly in the Cuatro Cienegas wetland in the Chihuahuan Desert, in Mexico. The 170 cactus-ringed pools contain important species of fish, snails, turtles, bacteria, and unique living rock structures that offer important clues to life on the earth millions of years ago. However, water is rapidly draining from the wetland. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

Abel Prize: a Nobel for mathematicians

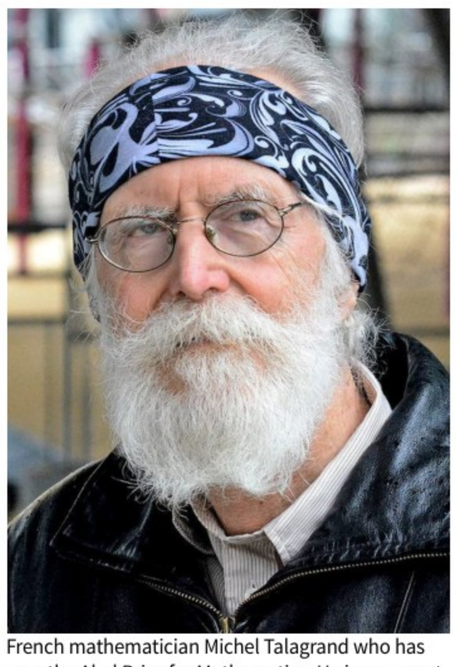
Vasudevan Mukunth

The Abel Prize for 2024 has been awarded to French mathematician Michael Talagrand for "contributions to probability theory and functional analysis, with outstanding applications in mathematical physics and statistics".

Every year, the King of Norway awards the Abel Prize to at least one scholar who has made a significant contribution to mathematics. The Government of Norway has been presenting the prize since 2003, and has modelled it after the Nobel Prizes, awarded in neighbouring Sweden, including a cash prize of 9 million Norwegian kroner (approximately Rs 7 crore) for the laureates.

This said, the idea for the prize was first floated back in 1899, after the Norwegian mathematician Marius Sophus Lie found out that Alfred Nobel's will didn't include a prize for mathematics. The year 1899 was also the birth centenary of Niels Hendrik Abel, a famous Norwegian mathematician after whom the prize came to be named. The Abel Committee selects each year's winners.

Dr. Talagrand's work in particular has been credited with "making random processes more predictable," as one *Nature* article put it. According to his biography on the Abel Prize website, Dr. Talagrand couldn't see in one eye as the result of a genetic condition. A decade later, when he developed trouble in his other eye, he became scared and studied hard at school, eventually discovering his knack for mathematics.



French mathematician Michel Talagrand who has won the Abel Prize for Mathematics. He is an expert on probability theory and functional analysis. AFP

For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to
science@thehindu.co.in
with the subject 'Daily page'

First annual examination for Class 10 to begin today

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The first annual exam for Class 10 (SSLC) will start from Monday, and a total of 8,69,968 students – including 4,41,910 boys and 4,28,058 girls – have registered for the examination across the State.

The examination will be held in 2,750 centres and to avoid malpractices, the Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board (KSEAB) has decided to webcast the examination process and conduct surveillance through app-based CCTV cameras this year.

This time, students will be made to sit facing the wall to avoid disruptions. All types of electronic devices, including mobile phones, smartwatches, earphones are prohibited in the examination centres.

The use of mobile phones is prohibited for officers and staff involved in security work and examination duty in examination centres. Only the superintendent of the examination centre will be allowed to use a basic mobile phone without camera facility.

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and other corporations will provide free bus service for the students. Students can travel free of cost by showing their ID cards and admission cards on the day of the examination.

"Students should follow the dress code prescribed by the educational institutions. They can wear school uniforms in the examination centres. They must also follow the directions of the Supreme Court and the government on the dress code," the board said.

The Department of School Education and Literacy has decided to provide midday meals to the students who are appearing for the exam at examination centres of government and aided schools.

After a green signal by a Division Bench of the Karnataka High Court, the KSEAB has rescheduled the halted board exams (Summative Assessment-2) for Classes 5, 8, and 9 from Monday. The KSEAB has already completed two exams for each class. The remaining exams will be resumed from Monday afternoon.

This year, students will be made to sit facing the wall to avoid disruptions. All types of electronic devices are prohibited. FILE PHOTO

Three suspected Maoists visit house near Kukke Subrahmanya

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

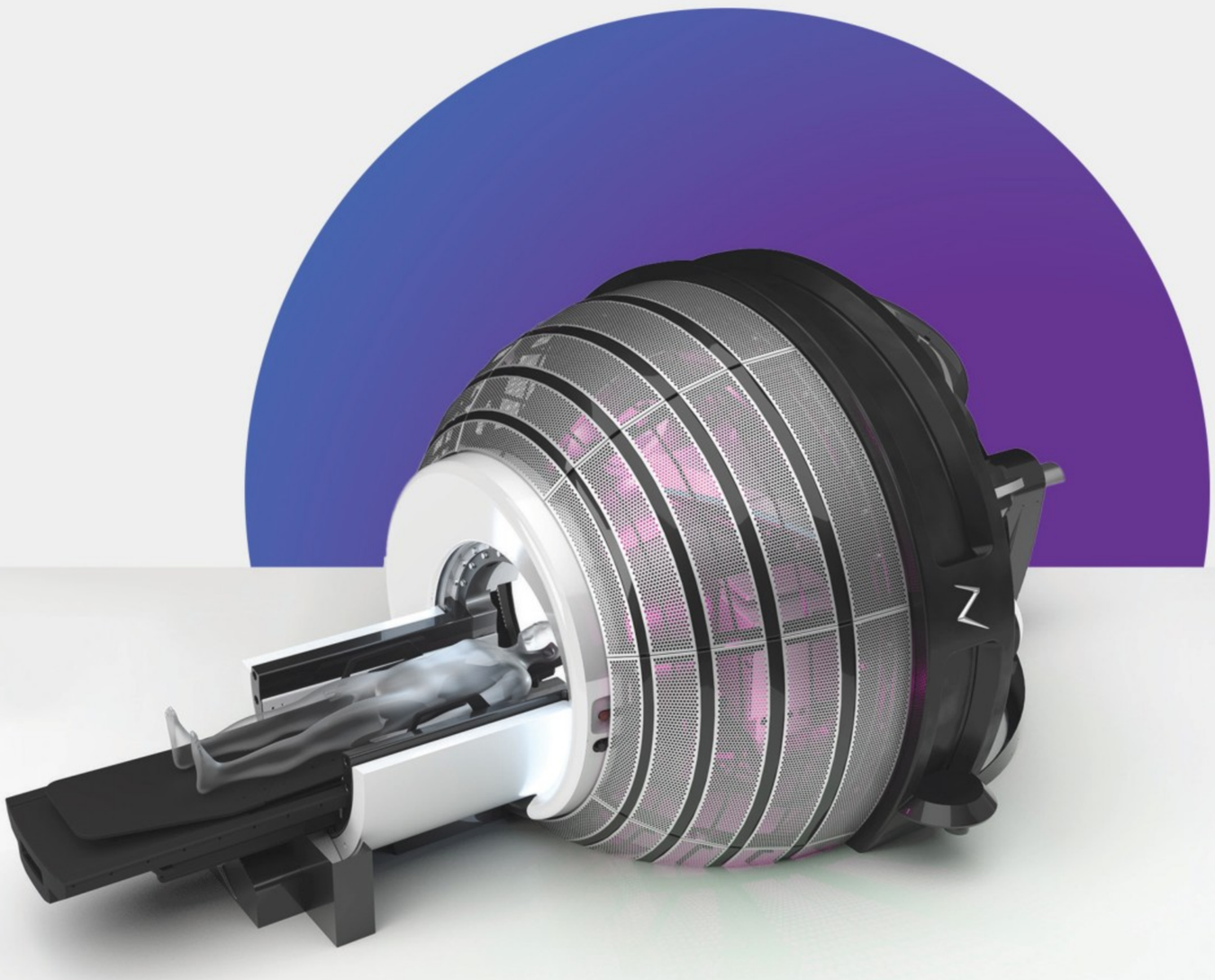
Three unidentified men, suspected to be Maoists, reportedly visited a house near Kukke Subrahmanya on Saturday evening.

According to reports reaching here, the three men visited the house of one Ashok at Majalu in Kote Thota, Ainakidu village near Subrahmanya. The three stayed at the house for about an hour.

The Anti-Naxal Force of the Karnataka police had launched combing operations in the forest areas of the Kodagu-Dakshina Kannada border near Subrahmanya on Monday following reports of a few Maoists being sighted in the locality two days ago.

Apollo HOSPITALS

Apollo Revolutionises Brain Tumor Treatment with South Asia's First ZAP-X Center



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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount invested by FPIs in equities in March so far

38,000 in ₹ crore. FPIs have shown a significant resurgence in their investment activity within the Indian equity markets this month. PTI

Iran's currency against the dollar as it hits a record low

613.5 In hundred thousand. Iran's currency plunged as its people celebrated the Persian New Year. Many Iranians have seen their savings evaporate as the currency has fallen. AP

Number of firms out of the top 10 that took a valuation hit

5 The combined market valuation of five of the 10 most valued firms eroded by ₹1,97,958.56 crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys taking the biggest hit amid volatile trends in equities. PTI

The number of Palestinians dead in Gaza so far

32,226 The toll includes at least 84 deaths over the past 24 hours, a statement said, adding that 74,518 people have been wounded in Gaza since the war began. AFP

Abducted Nigerian school children released from captivity

300 Kidnapped Nigerian schoolchildren were released more than two weeks after they were seized from their school in Kaduna. AP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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On the resurgence of mumps in Kerala

Is Kerala the only State witnessing an alarming increase in the number of mumps cases in children and adolescents? Why have there been many school-based outbreaks in the State? Why has the mumps vaccine been excluded from the Universal Immunisation Programme?

EXPLAINER

C. Maya

The story so far:

Mumps, an acute viral infection which historically affects children, has been spreading like wildfire in Kerala, for the past few months. Not just Kerala, a resurgence in cases was being reported from several States, including Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as well. Cases which began appearing sporadically around November 2023 in the Malappuram and Kozhikode districts of Kerala, have since then spread to Palakkad and Thrissur too, resulting in major community outbreaks. The case tally this year alone has reached 15,637, as on March 22, with 6,675 cases being reported this month. Such an uncontrolled surge in cases could lead to an increase in the number of complications of mumps, like meningoencephalitis or pancreatitis, public health experts fear.

Is it a cause for concern?

Mumps is a self-limiting, airborne viral disease and presents as fever and headache in mostly children and adolescents, with painful swelling of the salivary glands (parotid glands) on both sides of the face. There is no specific treatment and the patient recovers with rest and symptomatic management in about two weeks. With only half of the infected children developing the classical disease and close to 30% remaining asymptomatic, cases mostly go unreported, indicating that the reported cases are a gross underestimation of the actual cases in the community.

From the view point of public health, measles, which can cause significant morbidity and mortality, has always been considered a priority, rather than mumps. However, with cases being reported in epidemic proportions, several cases arising from the complications of mumps like encephalitis, epilepsy, aseptic meningitis and acute pancreatitis, have been reported at Kozhikode Medical College hospital. The other significant complication brought forth by mumps is the virus's effect on the gonads (reproductive glands) in both males and females. In males, it presents the rare yet distinct possibility of infertility or a drop in sperm count in the long term.

Stop the spread: A vial of the measles, mumps, and rubella virus (MMR) vaccine. REUTERS

Why is the mumps vaccine not part of the national immunisation schedule?

Despite being a vaccine-preventable disease, mumps has never been a part of the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) because of the disease's no-mortality profile and the perception that it has low public health significance. However, the Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) has always maintained that the public health significance of mumps has been underestimated mainly because of the poor documentation of clinical cases, its complications and patients' follow-up data as well as the lack of published studies. There is no nationally representative data on incidence of the disease. There is very little information on the actual long-term morbidity profile of the disease, even though the disease is known to have some impact on reproductive organs.

How can the current outbreaks be controlled?

Health officials maintain that creating public awareness about the disease and the importance of isolation is the most important tool in bringing down the transmission of the disease. Mumps is primarily being reported in un-immunised children and adolescents and hence improving general immunisation cover is important. Transmission of the disease begins before the symptoms actually manifest and isolation of the patient for a full three weeks is necessary to limit the spread of the disease.

Health officials reckon that one of the reasons for the large number of school-based outbreaks in Kerala is because children were allowed back to school as soon as there was symptomatic relief, before the three weeks isolation period was up. They hope that there will be a break in transmission and a drop in new cases once schools close for the summer break.

What should be the strategy ahead?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), vaccination strategies targeting mumps control should be closely integrated with existing measles elimination and rubella control.

The IAP for one, has always advocated the use of MMR (Mumps-Measles-Rubella) vaccine in UIP, which has been available in the private sector for a long time. There are no studies from India on the effectiveness of the mumps vaccine. But globally, the protection from two doses is estimated to be between 70-95%, if the coverage is high.

In 2014, Kerala, as part of its own initiative to protect children from Rubella, had replaced the second dose of measles vaccination given at 18 months to infants in UIP, with MMR. However, in 2017, when the Centre introduced Rubella vaccine in the UIP, replacing the two doses of measles given at nine months and 15 months with the MR vaccine (Measles-Rubella), Kerala also followed suit. Kerala has now written to the Centre on the mumps resurgence happening in the State and the need to replace MR vaccine in the UIP with MMR vaccine.

THE GIST

- Mumps, an acute viral infection which historically affects children, has been spreading like wildfire in Kerala, for the past few months.
- Despite being a vaccine-preventable disease, mumps has never been a part of the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) because of the disease's no-mortality profile and the perception that it has low public health significance.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), vaccination strategies targeting mumps control should be closely integrated with existing measles elimination and rubella control.

What are the new rules for elephant transfers?

What were the provisions regarding the ownership and transfer of elephants earlier? Why do experts and activists say that the law with respect to protecting elephants from trafficking has become lax?

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:

The Centre has notified a set of rules called the Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 that liberalises the conditions under which elephants may be transferred within or between States.

What are the rules around the transfer and transport of elephants?

Elephants are, according to the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, a Schedule 1 species and therefore, be it wild or captive, cannot be captured or traded under any circumstances. Section 12 of the Act allows Schedule I animals to be translocated for 'special purposes' such as education and scientific research. They can also be translocated for population management of wildlife without harming any wild animal and collection of specimens for recognised zoos/museums. Captive elephants because of their historical role in forest management, timber transport, presence in estates of erstwhile royal families and in temple precincts for religious purpose can be owned and therefore come under a special category. However, strict rules guide the transfer of such elephants. Section 40 (2) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 prohibits the acquisition, possession and transfer of a captive elephant without the written permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State. Until 2021, however, these laws explicitly said that such transactions ought not to be of a 'commercial nature'. The Environment Ministry in 2021 brought in an amendment that allowed the transfer of elephants for 'religious or any other purposes'. Such a broad interpretation, activists and researchers said, could accelerate trafficking and illegal commercial transactions. A standing committee, led by former Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh, opposed this section but it was passed into law.

What do the updated rules say?

These rules provide new relaxations under which captive elephants can change owners or be transferred. These include, for instance, situations when an owner is no longer in a position to maintain the elephant or when a state's Chief Wildlife Warden "deems it fit and proper" to transfer the elephant in circumstances which call for better upkeep of the elephant. Before a transfer within the State, an elephant's health has to be ratified by a veterinarian, and the Deputy Conservator of Forests has to establish that the animal's current habitat and prospective habitats are suitable. The Chief Wildlife Warden on receipt of such documents may choose to reject or approve the transfer.

If the transfer involves moving the elephant outside of a State, similar conditions apply. Before a transfer is effected, the "genetic profile" of the elephant has to be registered with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Earlier rules required that an elephant being transferred from say, Assam to Gujarat would need permissions from the Chief Wildlife Wardens of every State that the elephant would pass through in the process of being ferried by road. Now only the originating and recipient States' permissions are required.

What do the updates mean?

The Wildlife Protection Act is essentially a prohibitive law. It puts in a variety of restrictions to curb the trafficking of wild animals. However independent researchers say that with regard to elephants the law has become lax. The establishment of India's largest private zoo in Jamnagar, Gujarat which is affiliated to the Reliance Foundation, has brought some of these questions to the fore. The facility, which is a rescue centre and ostensibly exists to rehabilitate traumatised and injured elephants, among other wildlife, hosts a reported 200 elephants and controversially also hosts "healthy animals," according to a recent journalistic investigation published in the periodical *Himal Southasia*. There are also concerns that some of these elephants aren't captive but sourced from the wild.

THE GIST

- Elephants are, according to the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, a Schedule 1 species and therefore, be it wild or captive, cannot be captured or traded under any circumstances.
- These rules provide new relaxations under which captive elephants can change owners or be transferred.
- The Wildlife Protection Act is essentially a prohibitive law. It puts in a variety of restrictions to curb the trafficking of wild animals.

From Page One

BJP chooses Kageri over Hegde

The party had earlier announced a list of candidates for 20 seats.

Of the total 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka, the BJP is contesting in 25 while its alliance partner Janata Dal (S) will be fielding candidates in three constituencies. The BJP has announced candidates for 24 constituencies while the JD (S) is set to announce its first list on Monday.

In the first list, the BJP had changed nine candidates while in the second list it has changed the candidates in three constituencies.

HDD calls upon all parties in State to put up a united fight for Mekedatu project

He appeals to them to include the Mekedatu project in their election manifestos and seeks the Prime Minister's intervention to get clearances

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

JD(S) national president H.D. Deve Gowda addressing a press conference in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Stating that the Mekedatu balancing reservoir issue should be seen through the prism of the humanitarian crisis in Bengaluru and not through party politics, Janata Dal (Secular) supremo and former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on Sunday said all the political parties in Karnataka should be united in the fight for Mekedatu even as he appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and clear permissions.

"(Tamil Nadu Chief Minister) M.K. Stalin has put the Mekedatu issue in his party (DMK) manifesto (not to allow the Mekedatu project). We will put it in our manifesto to complete the project. All of us had put Mekedatu in our manifesto earlier. I appeal to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and the former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa to include the issue in their respective party manifestos. We have to be together in our fight and let us stand together. It is not the question of individual glory or party politics," the former Prime Minister told presspersons here.

He said the Prime Minister should give clearance to the project based on the official estimates that about 30 tmcft of water can be utilised for Bengaluru.

"He knows the issue. The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal has been silent on the issue. The counsel for Tamil Nadu has submitted before the Supreme Court that Karnataka should consider building a dam above the Mettur reservoir to solve the water problem."

Mr. Gowda said that the Central Water Commission had computed that the balance available for Karnataka at Biligundlu at 30.65 tmcft and that this important computation has not been considered by the Cauvery Water Management Authority and Tamil Nadu for unreasonable objections on the project.

Blames Tamil Nadu

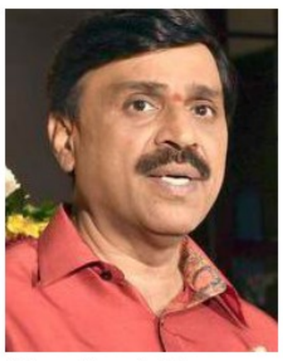
When he was asked if this was the failure of the State government, the former Prime Minister blamed Tamil Nadu for the issue and said: "It is not the question of the failure of the State government, but Tamil Nadu has been filing petitions every now and then. (the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu) late M. Karunandihi took maximum advantage during six years of the Vajapayee government and 10 years during the Manmohan Singh government."

Stating that Karunanidhi had not cooperated with the State's efforts on Mekedatu earlier, Mr. Gowda said: "Karunanidhi had told me then that the Cauvery is the only issue in Tamil Nadu politics that the parties fight on."

Appealing to environmentalists not to object to the Mekedatu project, he said: "Some environmentalists have objected to the project stating that 5,000 acres of forests will be submerged. In my opinion, about 1,000 acres will be submerged as it is a plain terrain. Drinking water should be the first priority."

Janardhana Reddy set to rejoin BJP today

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU


G. Janardhana Reddy

Kalyana Karnataka Pragathi Paksha MLA and controversial mining baron G. Janardhana Reddy announced his decision to rejoin BJP on Monday. He was earlier associated with the BJP for over a decade.

The decision comes following a meeting of his supporters at his residence here on Sunday and earlier backchannel talks with party leaders.

Former Minister and BJP Minister Govind Karjol was among those who met Mr. Reddy on Sunday. He will rejoin the saffron party in the presence of BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra, party Karnataka in-charge Radha Mohan Das Aggarwal and co-in-charge Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy.

He is the sole legislator from the Karnataka Rajya Pragathi Paksha after winning from Gangavati constituency in the 2023 polls.

"I am happy to announce that I will be going back to my mother. My supporters from Chitradurga, Koppal, Ballari, Raichur, Vijayanagara, and Kalaburagi districts will join the BJP with me tomorrow," Mr. Reddy told reporters and added that he wanted to strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that he had been associated with the BJP through the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. Mr. Reddy shot to prominence during the 1999 general elections when former Union Minister the late Sushma Swaraj took on Congress leader Sonia Gandhi in Ballari, which the BJP leader lost.

Mr. Reddy, however, did not disclose about the future of his party, and if he would merge it with the BJP.

Mr. Reddy, who was instrumental in the installation of the first BJP government --- headed by B.S. Yediyurappa --- for the first time in South India, was accused of using money power to execute 'Operation Lotus.

Arrest in 2011

Since his arrest in September 2011 over his alleged involvement in the illegal mining scandal in Ballari, the BJP had distanced itself from him.

Mr. Reddy has been out on bail since 2015. He made attempts to get back into BJP in 2018 and also before the 2023 Assembly elections. After his attempts failed, he launched his party in 2022 and party candidates contested mainly from constituencies around Ballari.

His re-entry into the BJP was being talked about for some time, but his participation in the BJP protest on the saffron flag issue at Keragodu in Mandya district further fuelled speculation. He, however, was believed to have voted for the Congress candidate during the recently held Raja Sabha elections. However, Mr. Reddy said that it was a media creation that he voted for Congress. "All that I had said was I voted as per my conscience. I never said I voted for Congress. BJP flows in my blood."

Mr. Reddy's comeback is expected to boost BJP's prospects in constituencies around Ballari, especially the fortunes of BJP candidate from Ballari B. Sriramulu.

CM: Congress stands to benefit from BJP-JD(S) alliance

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday claimed that the BJP-JD(S) alliance in Karnataka would prove to be beneficial to the Congress in the Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking to reporters at Mysuru airport, Mr. Siddaramaiah said the Congress could make no electoral gains in the State when the party tied up with the JD(S) during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Similarly, he said, the alliance between the BJP and JD(S) in this parliamentary elections would not help the alliance partners, but would instead benefit the Congress.

When reporters asked him how exactly the alliance would benefit the Congress, Mr. Siddaramaiah refused to divulge the "secret".

He reiterated that the Congress would win 20 out of the 28 seats in Karnataka and said the party's guarantee schemes would "majorly" hold the Congress in good stead.

"We have walked the talk. We have implemented the five guarantee schemes soon after coming to power. We have spent about ₹36,000 crore this year to implement the schemes and set aside another ₹52,900 crore for them in the coming year," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

"The Congress is relying on its achievements and contributions to society. The people of the State had blessed us last year (during the 2023 Assembly polls) and will do so in the coming elections also," he said.

The BJP "lies" to the people, he alleged. Out of the 600 promises made to the people before the 2018 Assembly elections, the party was not able to implement even 10% of them, he said.

Further, he went on to ask about the fate of the other promises made by the BJP, including giving ₹15 lakh to each person, generating two crore jobs, doubling the farmers' income, and 'Acche Din'. "Why will people believe in Narendra Modi?" the CM asked.

Ticket to leaders' kin

When asked about the party fielding relatives of Ministers in several Lok Sabha constituencies in the State, Mr. Siddaramaiah said the party had given the ticket to the persons favoured by the people in the constituencies.

He denied the charge that the Congress was perpetuating "family politics" and said the party leadership was respecting the wishes of the people.

JD(S) will announce its candidate for Mandya LS seat today, says HDK

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

JD(S) State president H.D. Kumaraswamy addressing supporters at his house at J.P. Nagar in Bengaluru on Sunday following his return from Chennai after undergoing a cardiac procedure.

Janata Dal (Secular) leader and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, who returned home on Sunday after undergoing a heart procedure in Chennai, said the party's candidate in Mandya would be made known by Monday evening.

"Leaders who grew in the party have now deserted us. None of them are standing beside me. There are no big leaders in the party. I will not disappoint you and by Monday evening the candidate for Mandya will be announced," Mr. Kumaraswamy told hundreds of his followers, who had gathered in front of his J.P. Nagar residence here.

While he returned home to take a rest, party workers who had gathered insisted on hearing from him. Despite an appeal by his son, Nikhil Kumaraswamy, the workers did not budge and raised slogans declaring Mr. Kumaraswamy as the party's candidate for Mandya. Later, the former Chief Minister told workers that though he was born in Hassan district, people in Mandya had showered love on him, and that he would not disappoint them.

Earlier, thanking for the prayers of his followers, he told reporters: "By the blessings of the god and people of Karnataka, my health condition is better. This has helped doctors succeed in their efforts. Doctors have also explained to me how the procedure went off."

> Whatever is possible from my side, I will do my best and ensure victory of NDA candidates in all the 28 constituencies.
>
> **H.D. KUMARASWAMY,** JD(S) leader

Three to four days' rest

On his participation in the election campaign, Mr. Kumaraswamy said: "Probably, I need three to four days' rest before I start walking normally. Whatever is possible from my side, I will do my best and ensure victory of NDA candidates in all the 28 constituencies."

On the State government's decision to approach the Supreme Court seeking the Centre to release drought relief, he said: "These are all stunts. Instead of enacting a drama on taxes and approaching the Supreme Court, I feel the government should work."

Mr. Nikhil Kumaraswamy said the party had convened a meeting of workers from Channapatna following which the decision would be announced. "We had decided not to field anyone from the family in Mandya. However, the situation on the ground is different. I lost the 2019 elections due to sabotage and that is why all of you are insisting that I should contest again. By Monday evening, you will know the party candidate."

'No problems with BJP'

Stating that the JD(S) did not have any problem in the seat-sharing arrangements with the BJP, JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda asserted that the party would not only win three seats, but C.N. Manjunath, who is contesting in Bengaluru Rural on the BJP ticket, would also win. At a press conference on Sunday, the veteran leader said the BJP had put him, Mr. Kumaraswamy, and senior party leader G.T. Deve Gowda on the list of star campaigners, besides giving three seats to the party.

Gaur poached in Nagarahole

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Some unidentified people shot and killed a gaur in the buffer zone of the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve on Sunday.

The incident came to light when the forest guards on duty heard a gun being fired at around 2 a.m. The field staff scoured the area from where the shot was heard and stumbled upon a gaur which was lying dead.

The poaching incident has taken place in the buffer zone of Anechowkur Range. The gaur was found dead on the road leading to the anti-poaching camp. The gaur was a male and aged around 10 to 12 years.

A case has been registered against unidentified persons under various provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

CORRIDORS OF POWER

White collar vs. red collar

The political slugfest between Congress and BJP leaders on BJP's candidate and cardiac surgeon C.N. Manjunath in the Bengaluru Rural Lok Sabha constituency is unlikely to end till the completion of the election. Apparently referring to the middle-class status of Dr. Manjunath, Magadi MLA H.C. Balakrishna said the BJP's "white collar" candidate was "unfit for politics" while Congress candidate D.K. Suresh knew every nook and corner of all the Assembly constituencies that come under the parliamentary seat. In a counter, Rajarajeshwarinagar BJP MLA Munirathna lashed out at Mr. Balakrishna and said the "white-collar" candidate treated many patients and saved the lives of many people. He alleged that "red-collar" Mr. Suresh had "looted the property" of the poor people and done nothing for the development of the constituency. BJP leader C.P. Yogeshwar too joined in hitting back and said Mr. Suresh had lost confidence and was indulging in "unwanted talk". Earlier, Mr. Suresh took a dig at Dr. Manjunath for his electoral entry through the BJP and asked if the former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's son-in-law realised that the JD(S) was "not good enough" for him to contest elections against the Congress.

Tryst with superstition

As the election campaign for the Lok Sabha election has begun, politicians have become more superstitious, even while venturing out from their residences. In one such situation, KPCC president and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar *(in picture)* came to the party office on Queen's Road in Bengaluru late by more than half-an-hour for the event of four-time MLC Marithibbe Gowda joining the party. Mr. Shivakumar, who often visits temples and offers prayers, said he left his residence after the "rahu kala" (inauspicious time) was over and apologised to the waiting journalists. It had a Domino effect and delayed the press conference by Chief Minister Siddaramiah, AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala and Mr. Shivakumar on electoral bonds.

Nagesh Prabhu

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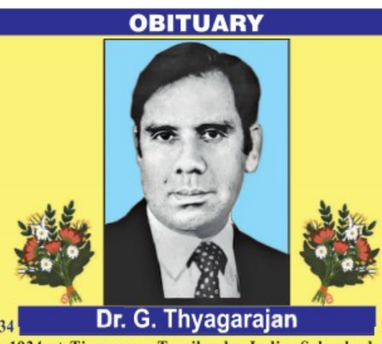
OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

OBITUARY



Dr. G. Thyagarajan

DOB: 02.05.1934 DOD: 24.03.2024

Born in 1934 at Tiruvarur, Tamilnadu, India. School education in Thanjavur. University education in Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1950-56. PhD (Chemistry) from Osmania University 1962. Post Doctoral Fellow, University of California, Berkeley, 1964-65. Over 40 years experience in R&D and R&D management.

POSITIONS HELD: ● Director, North East Institute of Science &Technology, Jorhat, 1974-80 ● Director, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad1981-85 ● Director Central Leather Institute, Chennai, 1984-94 ● UN Fellowship in industrial research management, The Netherlands 1973 ● Technical Advisor to the American Law Firm presenting the Indian Government side in the Bhopal case before US Court 1985 ● Science Advisor to Commonwealth Secretary General and Director, Commonwealth Secretariat , London 1987-91 ● UNDP National Expert to CLRI ● Chairman of Research Council of CFTRI, NISCOM, NEIST, and CIMFR, 1996-2009 ● Full time Consultant to Joint Parliamentary Committee on pesticide residues in soft drink, 2003-04 ● Scientific Secretary COSTED, I international Council for Science 1996-2002 ● Chairman Supreme Court Monitoring Committee on Hazardous Management 2004-2007 ● President Madras Science Foundation.

Deeply Mourned By: Capt R C Rajan, Dr Vidya Rajan, Prem Rajan, Colleagues, Friends and Relatives.

DEATH

Mrs. VANJULAM CHARI, 97 yrs

Former Correspondent PSBB Schools
Wife of late
R. VENKATACHARI (Still Photographer)
Reached Acharyan Thiruvadi on 24th March 2024
leaving behind Usha, Srimathi & Mohan and their families.
Contact : 72999 47356, 96771 78580

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES

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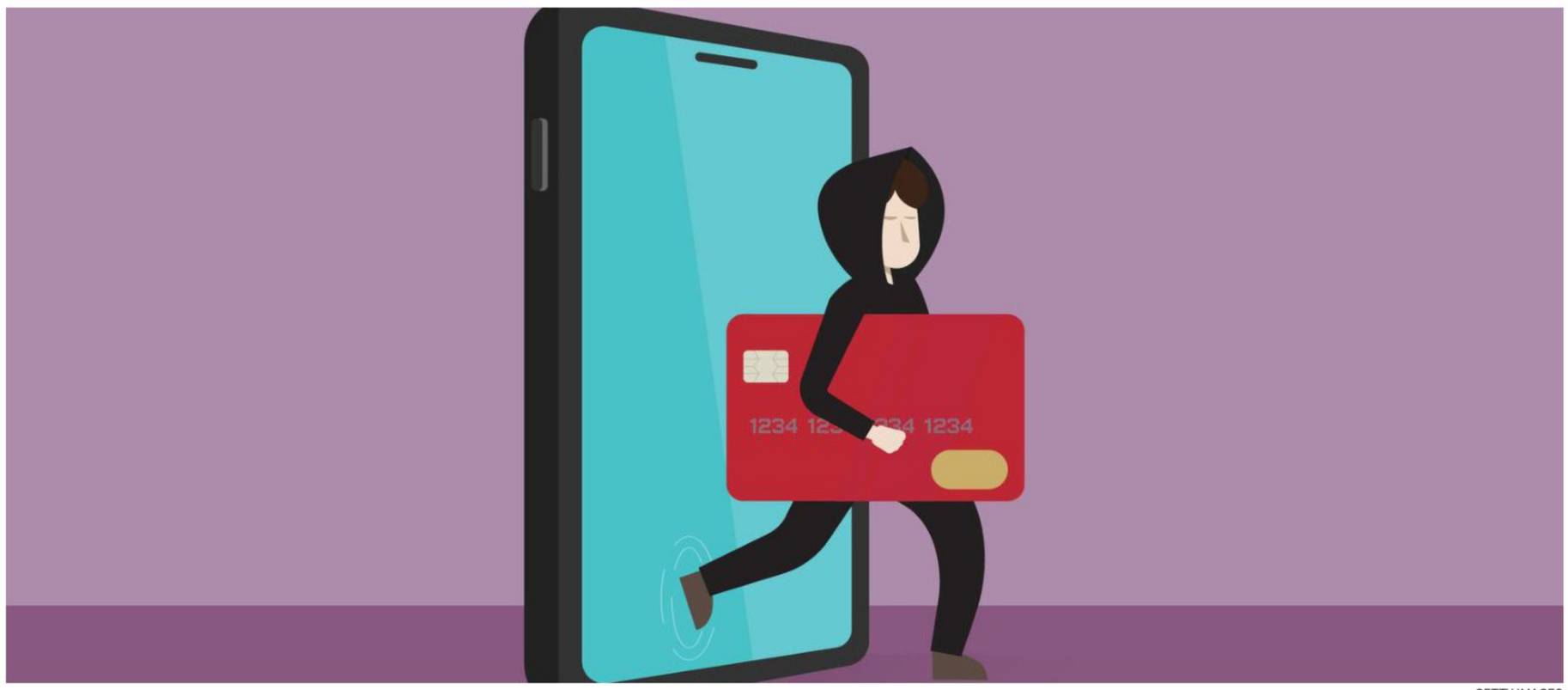


GETTY IMAGES

Digital financial frauds in India: a call for improved investigation strategies

A recent report by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre revealed that digital financial frauds accounted for a staggering ₹1.25 lakh crore over the last three years. Such fraud networks must be recognised as a serious crime and bail may be restricted by the Courts

Bharat Reddy

Cybercrime poses a burgeoning threat in India, impacting millions of individuals and organisations. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), cybercrimes in India in 2023 resulted in a staggering loss of ₹66.66 crore, with 4,850 reported cases. A recent report by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) revealed that digital financial frauds accounted for a staggering ₹1.25 lakh crore over the last three years. According to the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), in 2023, at least ₹10,319 crore was reported to be lost by victims of digital financial fraud. The Parliamentary standing committee on Finance in its report on "cyber security and rising incidents of cyber/white collar crimes" mentioned that the domestic fraud as reported by the SE (Supervising Entities) in FY'23 was ₹2537.35 crore. According to the report, the number of complaints received in 2023 alone was 6.94 lakh.

Some of the problems faced during investigations are highlighted here with solutions for both prevention and detection of online financial frauds.

How digital frauds work

While various names have been given to diverse types of frauds, the general *modus operandi* of a fraudster is any one of the following: (a) convincing the victim to send money, either by impersonation (fake WhatsApp/FB/Insta, social media profiles) or by giving them a false promise of greater return (investment, crypto, held up custom package etc.)

(b) by taking credentials such as Unified Payments Interface ID (UPI), Personal Identification Number (PIN), One-Time Password (OTP) or Internet banking ID/password from the victim and then using the same on other apps/websites and transferring money without the knowledge of the victim. For this the customer will either be given a fake link which looks exactly like a UPI app screen/banking website or the victim will be conned into installing a screen sharing app. The scammers can also convince the victims over phone to give out those details. When these details are used on official banking apps this gives the fraudsters access to even the Fixed Deposits/Recurring Deposits which are also siphoned out in most cases.

(c) by taking card details and convincing the victim to share OTP.

After the scam

After a fraudster empties a victim's bank account, the money undergoes a series of circulations in broadly three stages. The first stage is a temporary account into which the fraudsters transfer victims' money. This account will be used to receive money from various other victims as well. From here, the money is then transferred into a second stage account. The second category of accounts are a group of accounts among which money is circulated. There are a lot of middlemen who are money circulators. Their task is only to receive money from first level bank accounts for a nominal cut. The victim's money is then split into small parts and then circulated within these accounts, by a person who is sitting in a different corner of the country. After sufficient churning, the money is then transferred into a third stage account which is a sink account. This can be a bank account, an e-wallet etc. Here, the total defrauded amount from a group of victims is re-collected. The money is then withdrawn in a large chunk through conventional methods of either ATMs/cheques or e-wallet cash outlets such as an e-wallet payments bank.

How can frauds be prevented

Most frauds can be prevented with some basic technological interventions:

As a first, just as how Google accounts do not allow logging in from a new device unless permission is granted by the former, financial institutions must be mandated to replicate this feature in their apps. As soon as a UPI ID, password or OTP is entered in a different device, an alert must be generated in a previous device with no further action being allowed until it is approved by the person. Secondly, the screen share facility must be disabled. Banking and financial apps must disable screen-sharing to run on top of them. And finally, in the bank statement, all banks/NBFCs/SEs must be mandated to provide comprehensible data. Currently only partly printed numbers are shown which even knowledgable customers are unable to understand. The transaction description must contain the receiver's account/mobile or any other identifying number irrespective of it being within the same bank or to an outside bank.

One of the biggest hindrances law enforcement agencies face is in following the money trail. The siphoned off money hops across bank accounts and wallets within minutes but supervised entities/banks/NBFCs/wallets are not able to give the required details to agencies with the same speed. Most of the crime is reported after 24 hours of the commission. Due to stress and trauma most victims end up deleting much of the evidence from their devices/phones. By the time a money trail is established the money is already withdrawn from the system and there is no way to either identify the person or recover the money.

Speeding up information access

Certain basic changes to the form of data provided to enforcement agencies can help in minimising delays:

(a) the banks/NBFCs/SEs must be mandated to provide data in a predetermined format with all the terms explained. The data must be given in a CSV or XLSX file. For example, the CDR (Call Data Record) shared to enforcement agencies has a fixed format and fixed file types, such as .CSV or .XLSX. Currently the banks give the statement either in a printed hardcopy or in PDF format. This causes huge inconveniences to the investigating officers. Most tech-savvy officers are often held back only because they do not get the data in a usable format. (b) The International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) must be recorded. All banking and financial apps must be mandated to save IMEI details of the device being used. Fraudsters use fake mobile numbers and fake bank accounts which span across different States with the goal of adding layers to increase anonymity and preventing agencies from prosecuting them. Thus, the IMEI becomes crucial evidence in determining the device and its location. Recording IMEI will make for stronger evidence in establishing a device and its connection to fraudsters in a court of law.

The road ahead

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 which is set to replace the Indian Penal Code of 1861, recognises 'organised crime' as a "continuous unlawful activity". Digital financial frauds are very much covered in this definition. Law enforcement agencies face a lot of difficulties in conducting interstate raids and arrests. It requires a large team and coordinated effort. Interstate digital financial fraud networks must be recognised as a serious crime and bail may be restricted by the Courts. Additionally, digital frauds create a considerable amount of black money when seen from a macro-economic perspective. In conclusion, cybercrime being a subset of crime in general can be dealt like conventional offences, albeit with a different set of tools. Instead of a specialised unit, if the fintech and telecom industries are mandated to take certain preventive steps in their technology and provide data in a manner which enables speedier investigation, the prevention, detection, recovery and conviction will be much more effective. Faster availability of data will make it easier to identify and convict pan-Indian gangs.

The author is an IPS officer, currently posted as Addl DCP, Delhi Police.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

A quiz on the prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi award that has been in the news of late

V. V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Though the Music Academy Sabha was established in 1928 and began its annual music conferences in 1929, in which year did everyone, who had presided till then, get the title of Sangita Kalanidhi?

QUESTION 2
If Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer is the youngest male artiste to get the Sangita Kalanidhi, who is the youngest female awardee?

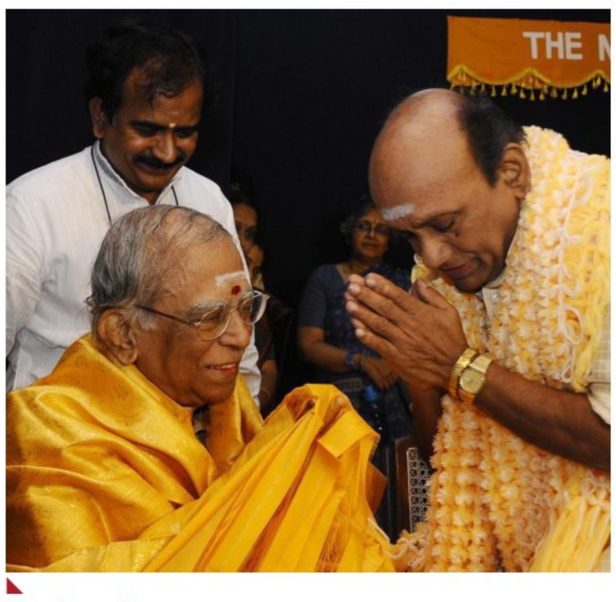
QUESTION 3
The award was not bestowed in 1946 and 1967 because of Thyagaraya's death centenary and bicentenary of his birth respectively. Why was it not given in 1975?

QUESTION 4
Before G.J.R. Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, the last sibling pair to get the coveted award was the 'Bombay Sisters' in 2010. Name them.

QUESTION 5
In 1973, who became the first dance artiste to be honoured with the Sangita Kalanidhi?

QUESTION 6
Musicologist Ananthakrishna Sarma was honoured primarily for what pioneering work?

QUESTION 7
Name the Carnatic legend who refused to accept the honour when he was first approached by the Academy saying there were other seasoned artistes who should be honoured before him before finally receiving the accolade in 1958.



Visual question:
Name the Sangita Kalanidhi paying his respects to another Sangita Kalanidhi. FILE PHOTO

Questions and Answers to the March 22 edition of the daily quiz: 1. The only overseas player to have the Orange Cap thrice. **Ans: David Warner in 2015, 2017 and 2019**
2. The only overseas player to hold the wicket keeping record of five dismissals in an innings. **Ans: Kumar Sangakkarara**
3. The only overseas player to have scored a century in an IPL final. **Ans: Shane Watson**
4. This overseas player holds the record for having played the most number of matches for a single franchise. **Ans: Kieron Pollard from Mumbai Indians**
5. The only overseas player to have taken five or more wickets in an innings twice. **Ans: James Faulkner**
6. This player holds the record for having won the most 'player of the match' awards. **Ans: AB de Villiers**
7. The overseas player to have figured in the most number of finals. **Ans: Dwayne Bravo**
8. The only overseas player from a non-test playing nation to have been part of the final. **Ans: Ryan ten Doeschate from The Netherlands**
Visual: Identify this player and the feat he achieved. **Ans: Mustafizur Rahman. He is the only overseas player to win the 'Emerging Player' award in 2016.**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Rajmohan. V

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

What we need is a stop-gap solution

His hubris led him to think he could solve it on his own. It only made matters worse

S. Upendran

How is the word 'hubris' pronounced? (Dr. Jayanth)
There are different ways of pronouncing this word of Greek origin. A simple way is to make the 'hu' in the first syllable rhyme with the words, 'cue', 'due' and 'few', and the 'i' in the second, sound like the 'i' in 'knit', 'chit' and 'bit'. The word can be pronounced 'HYUU-bris' with the stress on the first syllable. It comes from the Greek 'hybris' meaning arrogance or insolence. Hubris was looked down upon by the Greeks, and in Greek literature, those that had too much of it, were usually punished by the gods. Achilles, Icarus and Odysseus are three examples. You know what they say, 'pride goes before a fall'! Nowadays, the word 'hubris' is mostly associated with those who have excessive pride and foolish self-confidence – as a result, they behave in an outrageous manner, with little or no regard for the norms followed by all.

The movie mogul's hubris ultimately led to his downfall.

Please be careful. You're losing a lot of goodwill because of your hubris.

What is the meaning and origin of the expression 'stop-gap'? (Khan Ashraf, Thane District)
A 'stop-gap' solution to a problem is a temporary, and not a permanent solution to an existing problem. You hope to find a better solution, but till such time, you will continue to use the makeshift solution. Another term which is frequently used to refer to such a solution is 'band-aid solution'.

The two people we want to hire cannot join till the end of summer. Until then, we need someone as a stop-gap.

Till the inverter was fixed, we used the old diesel generator as a stop-gap.

Stop-gap is the shortened form of the expression 'stop a gap'; the 'stop' in the expression means to plug or close. So, when you 'stop a gap' what you are doing is plugging a hole as quickly as possible. You make use of whatever is available to plug or fix the leak.

What is a female administrator called? (Jyostsana Gulati, Rohtak)
This is a strange question to ask because, of late, the English language has been trying to become gender neutral. People, for example, have stopped using the suffix 'ess' to denote the female gender. Its use is considered rather old fashioned. Native speakers of English prefer to use the word 'actor' to refer to both male and female artists. Similarly, the suffix 'man' in words like 'chairman', 'spokesman', etc. has been replaced by 'person'. The words 'chairperson' and 'spokesperson' do not really indicate if the individual in question is a male or female. So, to answer your question, most people today would refer to her as the 'administrator'.

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Scurrilous:
expressing offensive reproach

Synonyms: opprobrious, abusive

Usage: *That was a scurrilous attack on his integrity.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/scurrilouspro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈskʌɹə.ləs/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Building beyond reality: Architects in demand in VR industry to design 3D simulations

An architect's understanding of 3D space is a much-sought-after skill by several XR (extended reality) start-ups today to design their simulated environments

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

From schools to museums to houses to cities, architects, for long, have been designing spaces around us. With the world starting to merge seamlessly from the physical to the meta, it seems like they are now in demand to design spaces in the virtual world too.

An architect's understanding of 3D space is a much sought after skill by several XR (extended reality) start-ups today to design their simulated environments. Many of them have a good number of architects in their design teams.

With the industry getting saturated and conventional jobs becoming hard to come by, many young architects too find openings in the XR space attractive.

Designing for 3D

At Bengaluru-based XR start-up AutoVRse the design team is comprised mostly of architects.

"That is one of the things that has helped us ensure our design is good," says Ashwin Jaishanker, co-founder of the start-up which currently has around 70 clients including Bosch, Volvo, Shell, IFB, TATA Motors, TATA Power & Energy, and Ultratech among others

According to him, VR or virtual reality is the next wave of technology, and it is important to generate awareness on the hiring side too. Multiple reports suggests that the global VR market size is expected to cross $200 billion by 2030.

"If you look at the technology prior to this, mobile apps were the major thing and developers were the most critical skillset. But VR is different and it requires a lot more architects," he notes.

But what makes architects so dear to the VR industry? Their "intuitive understanding of designing a 3D space", says Jaishanker.

"Their training is about how to design a 3D space. Whereas, if you look at the traditional designers who work at tech companies, they are trained to design for a frame. The guidelines of UI/UX designing get them more accustomed to thinking within the frame of a screen," he notes, sharing an interesting anecdote.

Serendipitous solution

In the initial days of AutoVRse, the team was looking for someone who had a good understanding of design and 3D, but didn't have the budget to hire leading interaction designers. Eventually, they came across an architect who was trying to make it in the gaming space and brought him on board as their first designer.

"The point of realization that we stumbled onto the perfect solution came much later," recollects Jaishanker.

"Three or four years after hiring him, we reached that point where we could hire interaction designers and we started interviewing people from more established design schools. We would give them the same test as architects. But their responses lacked one fundamental understanding, a sense of spatial design," says Jaishanker who is quick to add that there could be exceptions.

He feels that an architect's ability to design a space in the real world so as to ensure a good flow of people is easily transferable to virtual reality.

"The approach of interaction designers and UI/UX designers is very much biased by a 'mobile perspective' - for example to minimize the time taken to do a certain interaction on the phone - as opposed to making it a joyful space to exist in and meet other people in," he notes.

Newer possibilities

S.N. Vinutha, assistant professor at Dayananda Sagar College of Architecture, external consultant at IIHS and Partner Architect at Studio Vinami, feels that the XR industry could open new possibilities for the architect community which she feels is equipped to do any creative or design-based job.

"As students, we were told that architects are jack of all trades and master of none. We understand something about everything. We study art, environment, climate, topography, landscape, people's psychology, how the spaces affect your everyday life... So, I think our perspective are broader," she notes.'

There is one problem though. The industry is saturated.

"There are so many students graduating, but there's hardly any work. Even in places like Bengaluru and other metropolitan cities, architecture firms are doing less architecture and more interior design. It's all high-rise now and you can't get a chunk of land to do architecture in its real sense," says Vinutha who adds that several architects have taken to photography, UI/UX design, coding and so on.

Some start their own firms and studios, but not everyone has the financial prowess to do so. Many ends up doing jobs that neither pay enough to make ends meet nor appeal to their creative sides.

"So, if VR is offering a new possibility, then why not?" she asks.

Atish Patel, co-founder of Bengaluru-based XR company InfiVR, believes that the XR industry opens up new possibilities for not just architects, but for a larger community of 3D designers.

"3D designers and artists including architects and 3D modelers have been into engineering and gaming until now. "But now, with the boom of XR technologies, that whole community of designers are going get benefited. There is a complete gamut of designers, right from architects to interior designers to 3D modellers, who will get these opportunities,"

According to Patel, around 30 to 40% of his team is comprised of 3D designers. They include architects, interior designers and other 3D modelers, he notes.

Evolving ecosystem

According to Jaishanker of AutoVRse, virtual reality also offers architects the possibility to work without constraints of the real world.

"We offer them the ability to do whatever they want and break the rules of reality also. The architecture industry has its own set of problems and is not always very welcoming to freshers. When we hire, we tell them that they are not bound by the laws of reality, and they don't have to design plumbing lines to eventually work on the project of their dreams. I think that appeals to a certain set of people," he notes.

While the hiring of architects to VR companies so far has been through direct applications and referrals, Jaishanker notes that company would like to do campus hiring too. However, there are challenges.

"We are trying to work with institutions and asking people to step out of the career path they would have imagined for themselves. We would like to do campus hiring, but architecture students in their final academic year have to do internship with a licensed architect, which we are not. So, we have been hiring through recommendations and from applications we receive," he says.

Patel of InfiVR feels the flow of 3D designers to the VR industry hasn't peaked, however, he believes more will start moving in that direction as the ecosystem matures. In the recent budget, the Karnataka government proposed a ₹150 Crore investment towards the revised AVGC-XR policy that aims to create jobs and talent pool and also includes plans for an AVGC-XR park.

"Lately we are seeing some good traction. In fact, many a time, a lot of professors from these institutes do visit us for conducting workshops, courses and so on. But still, what I see is a little lack in in terms of exposure and understanding. But as the whole ecosystem grows more people will start looking at this as a future and a career path," Patel says.

JNCASR scientists develop pancreas-mimicking system for responsive insulin delivery in diabetes treatment

In this study, the researchers added special elements to the system that is responsive to abnormally high glucose levels in the body

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

Scientists at Jawaharlal Nehru Centre For Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) have developed a new silk-based hydrogel system that mimics the pancreas, offering a potential breakthrough in insulin delivery for diabetes treatment.

Innovative approach

The innovative approach is expected to provide a more efficient and responsive method for insulin release, addressing the challenges faced by individuals with both Type 1 and advanced stage Type 2 diabetes.

Prof. T. Govindaraju and his team from the Bio-organic Chemistry Laboratory, New Chemistry Unit at JNCASR, said that they were motivated by the success of a previously developed passive insulin release system. In that study, insulin was encapsulated in the silk protein fibroin and injected under the skin, resulting in the slow diffusion of insulin over a period of five days. Building on these findings, Prof. Govindaraju's team modified the silk protein to create a super smart system that releases insulin in response to glucose levels in the blood.

"The goal was to create a system that mimics the function of the pancreas, an organ responsible for insulin production and release in the body, providing a continuous and controlled supply of insulin in response to elevated glucose levels in the body, to manage diabetes," said Prof. Govindaraju.

In this study, the researchers added special elements to the system that is responsive to abnormally high glucose levels in the body and trigger the release of insulin, when needed. On injecting the silk formulation, it forms a gel underneath the skin, acting as a small storage area for insulin.

Insulin – a hormone playing an important role in controlling blood sugar – is then released in a controlled manner from this storage area, helping maintain the right levels of blood sugar in patients with diabetes. High blood glucose levels, indicating a need for insulin, prompts the release of insulin from the gel. This system is similar to having a tiny, self-regulating device that gives us just the right amount of medicine when we need it.

Gluscose-sensing molecule

To improve the ability of this gel for insulin release, the team used a glucose-sensing molecule called phenylboronic acid (PBA) and an enzyme called glucose oxidase (GOx). These components work together to sense changes in glucose levels and trigger the release of insulin from the gel.

When the gel is injected under the skin, its sponge-like structure helps hold and release insulin as needed, making it a glucose-responsive hydrogel platform for insulin release.

In the long term, this smart system could potentially offer a more natural and personalised way to deliver insulin, mimicking the insulin-releasing ability of pancreas.

Initial tests on mice showed promising results in terms of efficacy and bio-compatibility. It effectively controlled insulin delivery and normalised blood sugar levels. The transition to human trials and further development, however, is contingent upon industry partnerships and funding.

While the potential applications of this proposed silk-based system are many, ranging from drug delivery, wound healing to tissue engineering for various medical conditions, the team is now working on industrial collaborations to implement the system.

The silk-based insulin delivery system indeed has the potential to change lives, offering a more convenient and responsive way to manage diabetes, without the hassle of traditional insulin injections.

- Scientists at JNCASR have developed a new silk-based hydrogel system that mimics the pancreas, offering a potential breakthrough in insulin delivery for diabetes treatment.
- The innovative approach is expected to provide a more efficient and responsive method for insulin release, addressing the challenges faced by individuals with both Type 1 and advanced stage Type 2 diabetes.
- In the long term, this smart system could potentially offer a more natural and personalised way to deliver insulin.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 25, 1974

Fruit Trees Adapted to Local Conditions

Bangalore, March 23: The Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Hesarghatta, here has succeeded in adopting select varieties of plants and fruits to local climatic conditions.

Briefing newsmen who were taken round the farm, Dr. G.S. Randhawa, Director of the Institute, said that recent experiments had exploded the myth that certain varieties of plants and vegetables could not be cultivated in Bangalore.

Commercial mango orcharding had become risky and unremunerative, on account of the irregular bearing of popular varieties of the fruit. Research indicated that biennial bearing in mango was controlled by genetic factors not amenable to cultural manipulations. However, the institute has now shown that biennial bearing in certain cases could be overcome.

Warning to Milk Customers

Bangalore, March 23: The authorities of the Bangalore Dairy have requested customers not to buy milk coupons on advance payment from agents. They may buy milk on daily payment, if any customer purchases coupons from the agents in advance, the dairy will not bear the responsibility.

A press note said instances wherein agents had been issuing coupons unauthorisedly and insisting on advance payment for supply of milk had come to the notice of the dairy. In some cases the agents had collected advance amounts from the customers by issuing coupons and absconded.

CITYBEATS

Holi special

MARCH 23 TO 31
This Holi, it isgoing to be a splash of colours – not on your clothes, but on your plate. Experience hand-painted, vibrant tacos with natural vegetable hues, filled with delicious vegetarian and non-vegetarian choices. This is a limited-edition menu.
At Sanchez in Bengaluru (UB City). Contact 9606054210 for more information.

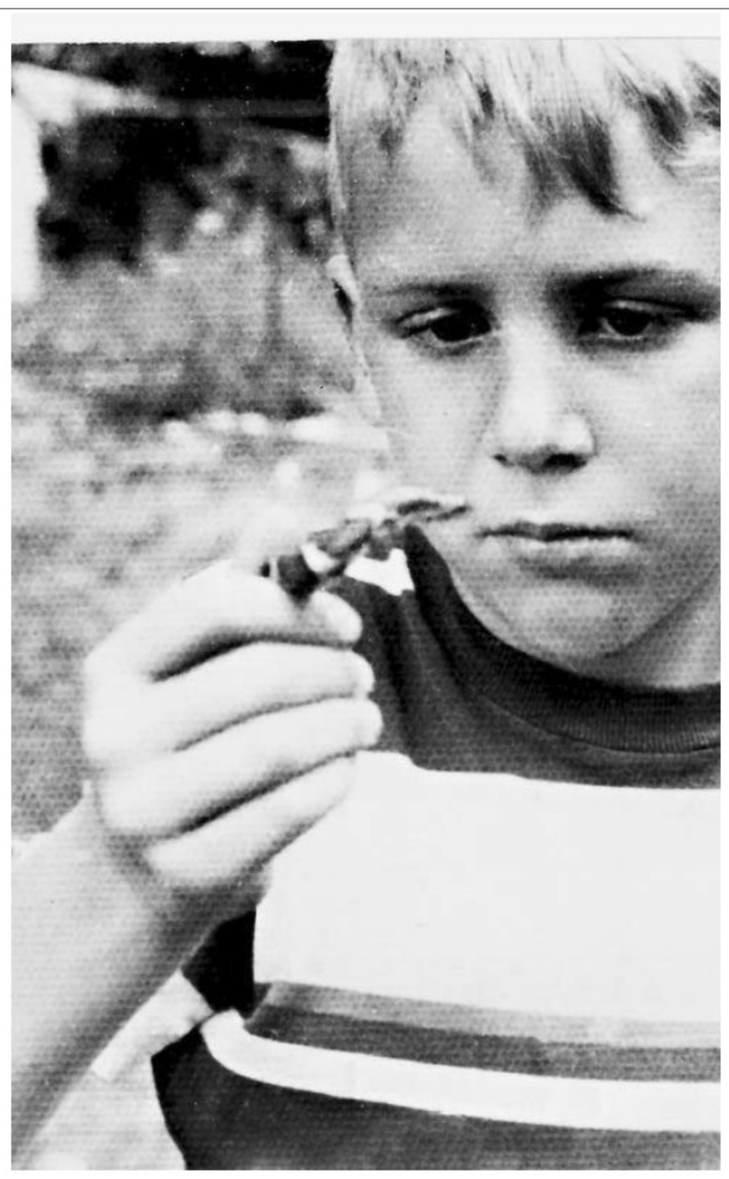
Easter doodles

MARCH 30 AND 31
Doodle your heart out on delicious cookies this Easter weekend. Enjoy a free, fun activity that adds a unique touch to your Smoke House Deli experience. This is a chance to unleash your creativity and transform your Easter treat into a personalised work of art.
At Smoke House Deli: Indiranagar and Lavelle Road. Contact 08041276272 or 08025200899.

Democracy's price

MARCH 25, 6.30PM
Controversial electoral bonds face scrutiny as India gears up for the 2024 general elections. Join experts Trilochan Sastry, Brijesh Kalappa and TM Veeraraghav for a discussion on election funding in India. An audience Q&A will follow. This event is part of BIC's Election series.
At Bangalore International Centre. Entry is free. RSVP at bangaloreinternationalcentre.org.

A life well lived Whitaker with his first milk snake in Hoosick, 1947 (right), memorable incidents from over the years. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Bengaluru-based Romulus Whitaker recounts memories, with creatures great and small, from the first 25 years of his life in his recently-published autobiography, *Snakes, Drugs and Rock N' Roll*

Shock and awe: Life as India's Snakeman

Gowri S

Promise me you won't kill a snake – Romulus Whitaker's mother said to the young boy, when he brought home his first milk snake in a jelly jar. He had found it under a rock on the pastures of Upstate New York's Hoosick, where he spent a few of his childhood years. She called the creature beautiful. This precious moment set the tone for Whitaker's life and career in the company of reptiles, big and small.

And, so it should come as no surprise that his life spills over more than one volume of an autobiography.

The unassuming American who is hailed as 'the snakeman of India' – for Madras, the man behind the beloved Snake Park and Crocodile Bank founded in 1976 – lays bare his early years in the irreverent, engaging *Snakes, Drugs, and Rock 'N' Roll: My Early Years* (HarperCollins), the first part of his autobiography written with author and wife, Janaki Lenin.

Janaki and Romulus will engage with naturalist Suhel Quader over an interaction about the book this weekend at Champaca Bookstore.

Was the title meant to shock? From his home, on the outskirts of Bengaluru, the 80-year-old opens with a hearty, full laugh.

"This seemed to be a title that would grab attention, at the snakes level, drugs level or the rock n' roll level. It also reflects the age that I was talking about, the first 25 years of my life. I have had this title in mind for possibly 10 years!" The book is an easy read with interludes from Rom's school days, his time in service as a medic for the US Army during the Vietnam war, and at sea as a sailor, among early days of career. The trajectory catches one unawares.

A long road

It took Janaki and Whitaker nearly five years to put the book together. It was no single moment or incident, rather the conversations that the naturalist had with acquaintances and friends who incessantly ask about what shaped his early life, growing up, and his time in Agumbe, that led to the idea of an autobiography.

Whitaker says, "I guess people just got sick of me telling an individual story, they said, 'we wanna hear it all'." His early years, sometimes in astonishingly vivid detail, thus came alive.

The details make one wonder about how well documented Whitaker's childhood years were.

"Actually, my mom Dorris Norden can be blamed for a lot of it because she was wonderful! She saved so many of my early writings, like the letters I sent home from school.

"Before she passed, she handed over everything she collected over the years. And it's not only the letters that I wrote home, but the letters I wrote to my cousins in America. They were very fascinated by my life in India," he recalls.

In all the hours spent discussing the flow of his memories, he is evidently nostalgic for some parts of his early childhood.

"Even though I was born in New York City and spent a few years there, the move to Hoosick out in the countryside was just magical. That set the tone for the rest of my life, really. I wanted to be out in the wild then, and I am still the same. If I want to relive something, it would be going back to that place."

Through the narrative, the onus Whitaker places on people and relationships is unmissable. A tiny window into his life and move to India, his school days in Lawrence School, Lovedale, and Highclerc School (now Kodaikanal International) and his relationship with his Indian stepfather Rama Chattopadhyay, and step-grandparents Harindranath and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, all make the narrative personal.

When he started working, a few others became pivotal to his life in the wild. In the US, it was his former boss at the Miami Serpentarium, Bill Haast, and a hero of yesteryear, Raymond Ditmars of the Bronx Zoo, and in India, another hero, a British doctor and herpetologist called Colonel Frank Wall.

A well-lived life lends itself naturally to an engaging read. "Well, it's my story so it's a bit hard not to boast too much but we did try to minimise the 'I, me, mine' adjectives. The combination of my memory, and Janaki's editorial skill is what shaped it," Whitaker adds.

This volume barely scratches the surface of his life's work as a naturalist. "The book shows me as a kid who didn't really gel with academics at all. I had much more fun out in the wild."

He assures, "The second volume is in preparation and we are halfway through it. I have 100 times more stories to filter out, and I am fortunate that Janaki is very clinical about getting the right story in the right place. We have to be meticulous in choosing the best ones."

Most mornings now are spent poring over nuggets of found memories and sheafs of research. More from an extraordinary life await, where all the wild things are.

Join Janaki Lenin, Romulus Whitaker and Suhel Quader for a fireside chat at Champaca Bookstore.on March 29, 6pm.

A lifetime's worth of frames

Ruth Dhanaraj

Chitrakoodam is an exhibition featuring the works of the late artist CN Karunakaran. While the artist's works span a period of around five decades, this particular exhibition focuses on the art he created between 2009-11.

For Archana Shenoy who curated Chitrakoodam, this exhibition stemmed from a personal connect with the artist. "We wanted to showcase a few artists who have been associated with the foundation space for a while now. I first met Karunakaran in 2006 at the Kerala Lalithakala Academy, in Cochin," says Archana.

"From then on, until 2011, he would regularly share his art with us. There was an ongoing association with the Sandeep & Gitanjali Maini Foundation (SGMF) and I definitely liked his style. There are a lot of artists such as A Ramachandran from Attingal, whose work reflects similar influences and who have found their place in the sun; however, a retrospective showcasing Karunakaran's legacy has been long overdue." she adds.

Karunakaran founded Chitrakootam, the first private art gallery in Kerala, in 1970. The exhibition at SGMF was titled Chitrakoodam in a bid to honour his contributions to art.

In Malayalam, 'chitrakoodam' means picture frame; in mythology, it was in the forests of Chitrakuta that Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshmana spent their exile. Chitrakooda was also the capital of the Kingdom of Cochin between the 12th and 13th centuries.

As an artist, Karunakaran was largely inspired by Nature and mythology and he usually worked with oil on canvas, though in some of his paintings he also used acrylic and oil to achieve a three-dimensional effect.

"This retrospective includes pieces created between 2009-11 and are cataloged works. This was a conscious decision on our part," says Archana adding, "When artists are no more, there's a chance for fakes to pop up in the market because it's harder to verify in the absence of well-kept records."

Something new, something old Artist CN Karunakaran and his art, the new wing of the Foundation (top left). SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

However, in 2011, artist Sathyapal TA authored a book titled *Mythic Imagination: Art of C Karunakaran*, in which he has documented the artist's work. "It's quite an extensive publication and we have kept copies at the gallery for visitors to refer to, while getting an insight about the artist and the details of his work," she says.

Chitrakoodam features 12 majestic canvases sourced from the estate of the artist which is managed by Palette People. Founded in 1991, the Palette People International Art Foundation works towards supporting the artists' community in Kerala.

Level up

The newly opened space comprising two wings is on the mezzanine floor of the building which also houses Gallery G.

"Right now, there are two exhibitions running simultaneously in this space – CN Karunakaran's retrospective Chitrakoodam and a Raja Ravi Varma segment showcasing the artist's divinity pieces," says Archana.

The two wings on this floor house the SGMF and the Raja Ravi Verma Heritage Foundation, respectively.

According to Archana, SGMF has been the principal patron of the Raja Ravi Verma Heritage Foundation, and with effect from February 29, 2024, they have been recognised as an official foundation, making them the go-to place for anything Ravi Varma.

"Ravi Varma has always been known for his depiction of divinity. So, we decided to open the space with those pieces for people to come and see what they have always loved about this artist," she says.

For this inaugural showing, the five most famous lithographs to this royal artist – Lord Shiva, Goddess Lakshmi, Goddess Saraswati, Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna – are on display. "All the artist's lithographs are permanently with the foundation, while many collectors who don't want to sell his paintings are happy to loan us a piece for a few months, which would otherwise be hidden away in a private collection. At this foundation space, we aim to constantly have a few of his original paintings on display at all times."

Chitrakoodam will be on display at the Sandeep & Gitanjali Maini Foundation, Lavelle Road till March 31, 2024.

Threads of history

Tapestry of Time One of the exhibits at MAP. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Unravel the complex history of 'India & the World: Stories of Trade and Textiles' at the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP) session, in Bengaluru. Join MAP archivist Priya Lewis for a journey through time, exploring the intricate world of trade textiles and their profound global impact.

At MAP's vast collection, a specially curated selection of textiles awaits. Examine these fabrics and discover how the threads of colonialism intertwined with political, economic, and cultural forces, shaped the textile trade. Each piece holds a unique story, reflecting shifting sociopolitical landscapes, technological advancements, and the intimate expressions of personal history and identity.

'Trade and Textiles' offers more than just a glimpse into the past; it is an opportunity to truly see seemingly ordinary fabrics in a new light. Gain a deeper understanding of their historical and aesthetic significance, a testament to human ingenuity and artistry through the ages.

MAP Bengaluru houses an impressive collection of over 60,000 works of art primarily from South Asia. From the 10th century to contemporary times, these works span a rich array of artistic media.

'India & the World: Stories of Trade and Textiles' aligns with MAP's commitment to fostering exploration and sparking curiosity about the multifaceted narratives within its diverse collection.

On March 26, 3pm to 4pm, at MAP Bengaluru. Entry is free. For more information, visit map-india.org.

Nirmala terms Karnataka govt.'s attack on Centre about funds as 'false and misleading'

The Union Finance Minister has been 'consistently denying the written word', says Chief Minister Siddaramaiah

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Terming the Karnataka government's attack on the Centre on funding as "completely false and misleading", Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said the devolution to the State and the Centre's grants in aid had increased while GST compensation had been completely paid.

Providing data before the audience at a programme organised by Thinkers' Forum here, she said the tax devolution under Prime Minister Narendra Modi government had increased by 258% or 3.5 times more than that during the UPA government and the Centre's grants to Karnataka had increased by 273% or 3.7 times when compared with that during UPA government between 2004 and 2014.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at an interaction programme in Bengaluru on Sunday. ANI

"While in the period between 2004 and 2014, ₹81,795 crore had been released as part of tax devolution, ₹2.93 lakh crore has been released to Karnataka between 2014 and 2024. Similarly, grants in aid to Karnataka increased from ₹60,700 crore between 2004 and 2014, to ₹2.26 lakh crore between 2014 and 2024," she said.

Urging the State government not to mislead people, she said: "Sometimes, the State received its share two months in advance so that it is not starved of money. Every penny due to Karnataka has been given and on time." She said that though the Finance Commission had not recommended the Centre's funding for infrastructure development, the Centre decided to provide interest-free loan for 50 years for infrastructure development. "Karnataka received ₹7,130 crore. So do they (Congress) acknowledge that what was received was not part of Finance Commission's recommendation?" On the Congress allegation that ₹5,495 crore recommended as special grants by the Finance Commission in its interim recommendation was not given to the State, Ms. Sitharaman said: "This is utterly false. The commission in its final recommendation did not have it."

CM hits back

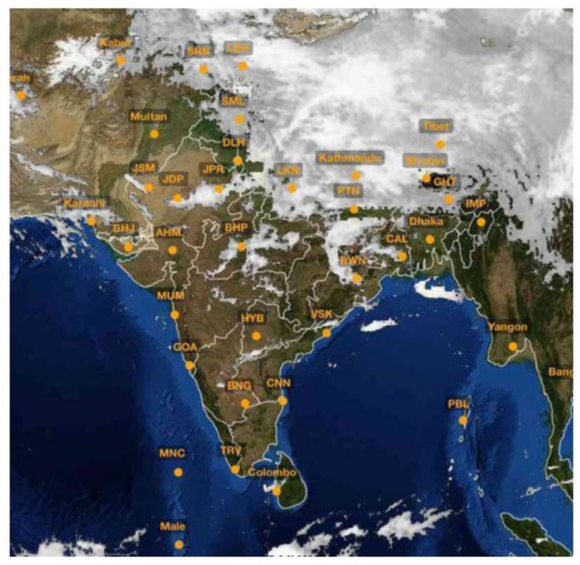
Meanwhile, responding to Ms. Sitharaman's statement, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said: "One expects the country's Finance Minister to speak the truth. Unfortunately, she has been consistently denying the written word. The interim report of the 15th Finance Commission for 2020-21 sanctioned ₹6,764 crore for three States, viz Karnataka (₹5,495 crore), Telangana (₹723 crore) & Mizoram (₹546 crore). These grants were recommended not because of any special love for these States. These were recommended to ensure that no State received a lower share in devolution in absolute numbers than the previous year." Taking to social media platform X, he said: "In the final report also the 15th FC recommended ₹6,000 crore for Karnataka, ₹3,000 crore for revival of waterbodies & ₹3,000 crore for the Peripheral Ring Road for Bengaluru. The Finance Ministry under Ms. Sitharaman refused to accept these two recommendations, thus denying the rightful share for Karnataka."

Kannada version

In Mysuru, without specifically mentioning the Congress government in Karnataka, Ms. Sitharaman on Sunday said she would send a Kannada version of the Finance Commission's recommendations. "Tell me if the amount that is being claimed by the Karnataka government is part of the recommendation of the final report or not. If it is not part of the final report then how do I give it," she asked.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gusty winds very likely at isolated places over West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya. Heavy rainfall/ snowfall very likely at isolated places over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	32.0	17.2	Kozhikode	—	37.0	28.4
Ahmedabad	—	37.9	23.9	Kurnool	—	39.7	27.4
Aizawl	15.0	30.0	15.6	Lucknow	—	34.5	17.4
Allahabad	—	38.2	17.4	Madurai	—	37.7	25.1
Bengaluru	—	35.4	21.2	Mangaluru	—	34.3	25.4
Bhopal	—	36.9	21.4	Mumbai	—	30.8	23.6
Bhubaneswar	—	35.3	24.2	Mysuru	—	—	—
Chandigarh	—	30.0	16.2	New Delhi	—	29.8	17.5
Chennai	—	33.7	25.4	Patna	—	31.4	20.0
Coimbatore	—	36.3	24.1	Port Blair	—	32.8	25.7
Dehradun	—	27.4	14.9	Puducherry	—	33.4	25.2
Gangtok	3.0	15.2	9.0	Pune	—	38.9	21.8
Goa	—	33.1	24.0	Raipur	—	35.0	20.5
Guwahati	1.0	26.0	18.1	Ranchi	—	33.2	18.1
Hubballi	—	37.0	24.0	Shillong	0.2	18.4	10.1
Hyderabad	—	37.3	26.7	Shimla	—	18.2	11.4
Imphal	4.0	25.2	12.7	Srinagar	—	21.9	10.2
Jaipur	—	35.0	22.4	Thiruvananthapuram	—	36.0	25.4
Kochi	1.0	33.0	27.0	Tiruchi	—	37.1	24.6
Kohima	1.2	13.4	8.6	Vijayawada	—	36.5	24.4
Kolkata	—	33.6	25.5	Visakhapatnam	—	32.8	26.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.15	186	.60	..97	..89	
Bengaluru	.10	..17	.24	..96	.128	
Chennai	.13	...8	101	..41	..49	
Delhi	.24	..85	.64	.342	.271	
Hyderabad	...4	..35	.45	..77	.139	
Kolkata	.17	..17	.25	..49	..73	
Lucknow	.10	..23	.81	.188	.115	
Mumbai	.85	..35	101	..64	..80	
Pune	.17	..19	.18	..76	..97	
Visakhapatnam	.12	..41	.21	..54	..93	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Jalna, Maharashtra recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 265 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Dharwad, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 27

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Key component of NISAR satellite sent to U.S., launch delayed

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The launch of the NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite has been delayed as a key component of the satellite has been sent back to the United States of America.

The satellite was scheduled to be launched in the first quarter of 2024. However, now the launch readiness date will be determined at the end of April.

According to NASA, a special coating needs to be applied to hardware components on the satellite's 39-ft-diameter radar antenna reflector, which is among the agency's primary contributions to the mission. It said that it is a precautionary step to mitigate any temperature increase that could potentially affect the deployment of the reflector.

BJP files complaint with EC against Siddaramaiah, Jayaprakash Hegde

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Opposition BJP has filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India, accusing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of trying to defame the party in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls by levelling allegations that the BJP was trying to woo Congress MLAs by offering them ₹50 crore each.

In a complaint before the Chief Electoral Officer of Karnataka on Sunday, a delegation of BJP leaders led by the former Minister S. Suresh Kumar alleged that the Chief Minister had made such an allegation with a political intention of defaming the BJP at the time of the Lok Sabha election. Terming the allegations as "false", the BJP delegation said the Chief Minister had failed to furnish evidence to support his allegations.

Describing this as a violation of the model code of conduct (MCC), the BJP delegation demanded that Mr. Siddaramaiah apologise to the BJP for such allegations and also withdraw his remarks. It also urged the EC to initiate an appropriate action against him.

The BJP delegation also filed a complaint against Congress candidate for Udupi-Chikkamagaluru constituency K. Jayaprakash Hegde for his reported appeal to voters not to support his BJP rival Kota Srinivas Poojary on the grounds that he does not know English and Hindi languages. Mr. Hegde had said that knowing only Kannada language would not help work effectively in Delhi as an MP, the complaint pointed out.

The BJP described this as an assault on the pride of Kannadigas and an insult to the language. Stating that such remarks would amount to violation of the model code of conduct, the BJP demanded action by the EC.

Question of security

Fail-proof measures need to be adopted to avoid question paper leaks and maintain the integrity of important exams

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

P.V. Navaneethakrishnan

Exams are not confined to educational institutions but are also used in other areas to evaluate talent for employment or elevation. In this context, the cancellation of two exams held in Uttar Pradesh in February is disturbing. The police recruitment exam taken by over 43 lakh candidates was held across 2,385 centres across 75 districts and had a mere 0.014 probability of success. The State Public Service Exam for the post of Review Officers had over 10 lakh candidates and was held across 2,000 centres in 58 districts.

There are two aspects of concern. One is the mental stress and anxiety of the candidates who would have not only worked to prepare but would have had to deal with the logistics and expenses to take the exam. Second is the reason for cancellation: leaking of the question papers. There is talk of coaching centres, individuals and candidates being involved in this.

In the past

The issue of question paper leakages has been a vexing problem in education. Just take a look at the following examples: January 2024, Rajasthan Teacher Recruitment Exam; April 2023, a teacher leaked a Class 10 exam paper in Telangana; 2020, four government employees were arrested with regard to a recruitment exam for junior engineers in Rajasthan; 2003, the CAT exam paper was leaked; 1997, the IIT-JEE question paper was leaked in some centres, including Tirupati.

Today with exams being conducted both offline and online, the question paper may be a printed one or an electronic one.

In the first case, the issue of security begins at the press. The printer should be selected on the basis of reputation rather than the "lowest quote". A representative of the examining organisation should be physically present during printing, packaging and despatch of the papers.

The packets should be received by the superintending officer of each centre who should store them securely until the exam. Anna University, Chennai, had adopted this procedure for its entrance exams, including the Tamil Nadu Professional Courses Entrance Exams, without a problem.

On the other hand, when the question paper is sent to the exam centre to be printed, the email should be encrypted and the password made available only to the designated authority.

Online mode

When it comes to online exams, in many cases, the paper may differ from candidate to candidate. However, technical glitches can affect the conduct of the exam and also have an impact on the question paper security.

This is what happened in the first edition of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) in 2022 and the exams had to be postponed in many centres

In 2018, technical snags of a large magnitude occurred in the online exam conducted by the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Emirates. The authorities immediately switched over to offline mode in the affected institutions and got over the difficulty with only 30 minutes delay. Such measures can be adopted by allowing for adequate manpower and basic materials such as a master copy of the question paper kept ready to create the required number of hard copies in convenient nodal centres.

The writer is Former Professor and Director, Entrance Exams and Admission, Anna University, Chennai.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Kotak Suraksha Scholarship Programme
An initiative from Kotak Securities Limited (KSL) to support students.
Eligibility: Open to PwD applicants from Classes 9 to 12 or pursuing general/ professional graduation in India who have secured at least 55% marks in their previous academic year. Annual family income must not exceed ₹3.2 lakhs
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University of Bath GREAT Scholarship, India 2024
An opportunity offered by the University of Bath in collaboration with the British Council's Study UK campaign.
Eligibility: Open to Indian students with a valid passport who hold an offer from the University of Bath to pursue a full-time, Postgraduate taught Master's course starting in 2024 and are classified as international students for tuition fee purposes.
Rewards: £10,000 for one year
Application: Online
Deadline: May 20
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A joint initiative of University College London (UCL), the British Council, and the GREAT Britain Campaign.
Eligibility: Open to Indian nationals who have applied to study for a full-time Master's degree at UCLin 2024/25 and have received an offer for a place by the closing date.
Rewards: £10,000 for one year
Deadline:
Application: Online
Deadline: May 7
www.b4s.in/edge/GUC1

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

SAVE THE DATE

SBI Youth for India Fellowship
The SBI Foundation invites applications for the 13-month programme, which aims to empower youth to create transformative change in rural communities.
Themes: Health, Rural Livelihood, Food Security, Environmental Protection, Education, Water, Technology, Women's Empowerment, Self-Governance, Social Entrepreneurship, Traditional Craft and Alternate Energy.
Eligibility: Those between 21 and 32 years who are either Indian citizens or hold an OCI card or are citizens of Nepal or Bhutan and are committed to advancing sustainable development objectives in rural areas.
https://bitly.ws/3gcbR

James Dyson Award
The James Dyson Foundation, invites entries of novel inventions that tackle a real-world problem.
Eligibility: Entrants must be, or have been within the last four years, enrolled for at least one semester in a UG or PG engineering/ design-related course at a university in a country or region chosen to participate in the James Dyson Award.
Last date: July 17
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M. Sc. Advanced Pharmaceutical Manufacturing
The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, the U.K., invites applications for its one-year course starting in September 2024.
Eligibility: Minimum second-class (2:2) Honours degree in Science or Engineering; two references (at least one academic). Minimum IELTS score of 6.0 (with no component below 5.5).
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Questionable conduct

Centre should be worried by Governors' reluctance to follow the Constitution

The conduct of the Tamil Nadu Governor, R.N. Ravi, has been constitutionally questionable for quite some time now. In the latest instance, his refusal to allow the re-induction of K. Ponmudy into the Tamil Nadu Cabinet has been exposed as unwarranted. Following some strident criticism from the Supreme Court, Mr. Ravi administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mr. Ponmudy, whose conviction in a corruption case was recently stayed by the Court, resulting in his eligibility to be a Member of the Legislative Assembly being restored. Mr. Ravi had taken the legally untenable stand that it would be against "constitutional morality" to re-induct Mr. Ponmudy based on the stay of conviction. In the Governor's interpretation, the order of the two-judge Bench, staying the conviction recorded by the Madras High Court, was only by way of interim relief, and that it meant that the conviction was "existent, but made non-operative" and did not amount to its being set aside. The interpretation was quite questionable, as the legal consequences that flow from a criminal conviction in a corruption case – loss of eligibility for being a legislator and, therefore, for being a Minister – stand suspended as soon as the conviction is stayed. Parliament and the State legislatures restore the membership of those convicted as soon as the conviction is stayed, even if their seats had been declared vacant. The Governor's confusion of "morality" and principles of good governance with legality seemed deliberate.

As Mr. Ravi's propensity to find new ways to get under the skin of the DMK regime becomes more apparent, two things stand out: his reluctance to accept the limitations of his office and the Union government's failure to act on the increasing instances of its Governors being pulled up by the Court. On an earlier occasion, the Court had noted that he had disposed of Bills pending with him only after his prolonged inaction was questioned by the Court. In the latest instance, he gave enough cause for the Court to ask, "If the Governor does not follow the Constitution, what does the State do except come to a constitutional court?" Things have come to such a pass that only a vocal court can discipline them. Given the plurality of litigation concerning the conduct of Governors, it is disconcerting that the Centre does not see any scope for remedial measures, when it ought to be its duty to replace Governors who are pathologically averse to following the Constitution. The only explanation is that their conduct is driven, not by constitutional norms, but by the political assignment given to them by those appointing them.

Unbreakable

India and Bhutan have forged closer ties at a time of regional challenges

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhutan last week, while productive, was largely symbolic. Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay's lengthy bilateral with Mr. Modi a week earlier in Delhi, obviated the need for such a second back-to-back visit. The announcement of India's doubling of support for Bhutan's Five Year Plan, from ₹5,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore, was significant, but has been under discussion, and could have been made later, post the elections as well. The highlight of the visit, of Bhutan's King conferring Bhutan's highest civilian award on Mr. Modi, had been announced in 2021 for India's support during the COVID-19 pandemic, and also need not have been done right now. The fact that Mr. Modi went ahead with the visit, despite India's electoral Model Code of Conduct in place, his campaign schedule, and inclement weather in Bhutan nearly derailing the programme, indicates how important it was. The symbolic messaging was threefold: first, that India is fully committed to Bhutan's development, particularly the upcoming Gelephu Mindfulness City, a project likely to benefit from India's increase in financial support to its neighbour. Second, Bhutan is an integral part of India's infrastructure initiatives for road, rail, integrated check points, and also for energy exchanges on India's grid, both of which are pushing sub-regional trade and travel among India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. Third, that India is mindful of Bhutan's increased engagement with China, for the boundary agreement they hope to forge soon, but that it does not intend to give Beijing space in areas of engagement such as trade and investment, where China has made inroads with India's other close neighbours.

As a result, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra may have feigned disinterest when he brushed aside a question on the China-Bhutan boundary talks, but they are important. China-Bhutan talks about the possible swap of land at Doklam to Bhutan's west are, in fact, seen as a threat to India's Siliguri Corridor, whereas China's claim to areas on Bhutan's east could imperil India's border connectivity projects in Arunachal Pradesh. Recent reports, which the Ministry of External Affairs has not denied, indicate that Bhutan may have even asked India to go slow on those projects until its boundary talks with China are complete. As a result, the most important message from Mr. Modi's sojourn was one of a united front at a time of change. Accepting his award, Mr. Modi called India-Bhutan ties "unbreakable". India and Bhutan will need to emphasise that lock-step even more in the days ahead to retain the permanence of their ties in the face of economic and social turmoil within their countries, as well as the challenge in the neighbourhood.

TB control in India calls for person-centred solutions

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan

is the Chairperson of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF). She was the Chief Scientist of the World Health Organization (WHO)

Chapal Mehra

is a public health specialist and the Convenor of Survivors Against TB (SATB)

Even though World TB Day (March 24) has passed, recognising the needs and the interests of patients and communities must form the basis of disease elimination

Globally, and in India, tuberculosis (TB) continues to loom large as a public health challenge impacting millions. Despite ambitious goals set by India's health authorities to eliminate TB, the challenge is huge and progress is not fast enough. Access to efficient and high quality care – diagnosis, treatment and support – is still not available to every person suspected to have TB or diagnosed with the disease. As India grapples with the complexities of controlling TB, we need a paradigm shift urgently – one that places those affected and their lived experiences at the centre of tackling this ancient disease.

At the core of this shift lies a fundamental recognition: the needs and the interests of patients and communities must be prioritised within the care paradigm and the health-care system. This principle, echoed by survivors, communities, health experts and policymakers, underscores the need for a person-centred approach to TB care and management.

Understanding lived experiences

Perhaps our greatest gap has been in understanding the lived experiences of the affected individual fighting and surviving TB. Too easily, we assume their needs, their challenges, and their expectations. In no other service paradigm are the voices of end users ignored. We have, at times, been guilty of over-medicalising this disease, as doctors and public health folks often do. We have often forgotten to see TB as a human crisis, a gendered crisis, an economic challenge, and a social and environmental one as well.

Over the years, this has been changing, with the emergence of strong TB survivor advocates who have stridently worked to put the needs of affected communities on the table. They have sought change in key areas and governments have listened and modified their own approach to meet community needs. A case in point is nutritional support, which while limited, is an important step. Further, the growing focus on patient support, addressing stigma, and gendered aspects of TB has also been important.

Is this enough? Not entirely. To provide high quality, person-centred care, we need to bridge the gap between policy intent and on-the-ground realities. For instance, India needs to prioritise targeted interventions aimed at improving and expanding access to TB diagnosis and treatment. We need to expand the reach of TB testing facilities, particularly in rural and underserved areas, and ensure the availability of free, affordable and quality-assured TB drugs. Molecular testing is the gold standard and less than a quarter of symptomatic patients are getting that as their first test. Recent reports of drug and diagnostics stockouts are troubling and unacceptable.

Care needs to be more humane

Additionally, we need to focus on efforts to make care more humane. Hence, mental health support and gender responsive care become critically important. Efforts are also needed to strengthen community-based TB care models, empowering frontline health-care workers to deliver comprehensive care which addresses not just treatment but also social, economic and mental health needs and is closer to where patients live. This is important as survivor narratives tell us the stigma, discrimination and mental stress they go through, not to mention the side-effects of treatment.

By supporting frontline TB workers, strengthening supply chains and procurement mechanisms, decentralising TB services and empowering local communities, India can reduce stigma, overcome barriers to access and enhance treatment outcomes.

While TB can affect people of any class, religion, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, it disproportionately affects the most marginalised in society, including children, the urban poor, prisoners, and people living with HIV/AIDS. The disease has gone beyond being a health crisis alone. It is an economic crisis which by some estimates, costs India billions in losses each year and pushes families and communities into debt and poverty.

Addressing the socio-economic determinants of TB requires a multi-sectoral approach. Poverty alleviation, improvement in nutritional status, well-ventilated housing and better air quality will all contribute towards reducing TB. Recent research has shown that nutritional supplementation reduced TB incidence substantially in household contacts of adults with microbiologically confirmed pulmonary TB. By tackling the underlying root causes of TB, India can make significant strides towards eliminating the disease and improving the overall health and well-being of its population.

Tapping technology

Leveraging technology and innovation holds promise in enhancing TB care efforts in India. The adoption of AI and digital health solutions for TB diagnosis, adherence and surveillance can revolutionise the way TB care is delivered and accessed in the country. By investing in developing better vaccines, we can hope to ultimately eliminate this airborne disease.

The path to TB elimination in India requires a concerted effort to prioritise person-centred care, address social determinants of health, and embrace innovation. By adopting a holistic and person-centred approach, India can overcome the barriers that stand in the way of TB control and create a healthier future for all its citizens.

Actionable ideas for TB control

Aruna Bhattacharya

is Lead – Academics and Research, School of Human Development, Indian Institute for Human Settlements. She is a medical anthropologist and public health specialist with over two decades of experience of working on tuberculosis control

India remains a TB hotspot but there can be change with early diagnosis and continuous treatment that is accessible to all

Every day, 3,500 people worldwide lose their lives to tuberculosis (TB), and around 30,000 people become infected with TB bacilli, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates. India alone accounts for 27% of global TB cases. This is jarring, given that TB is a detectable and curable disease and TB diagnosis and treatment protocols have been a part of existing health systems for a long time.

World TB Day, on March 24, commemorates Dr. Robert Koch's discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (the bacteria that causes tuberculosis) in 1882. Despite its discovery then, possible treatments using streptomycin in 1943 and the discovery of antibiotics such as isoniazid and rifampicin in the 1950s and 1960s, the war against the pathogen is far from been won, and there are multiple challenges to be overcome in combating the disease.

Still a disease hotspot

India remains a TB hotspot. The TB control programme in India has undergone several changes since its inception in 1962, incorporating evidence from various domains of public health and health systems, including pharmacology, microbiology, epidemiology, the social sciences, and information technology.

The theme for World TB Day 2024 (March 24), 'Yes! We can end TB!', underscores the potential to eradicate TB with existing disease control mechanisms, infrastructure, training, and the political will. Yet, TB in its various avatars – drug-resistant (DR-TB), totally drug-resistant (TDR-TB), extensively drug-resistant (XDR-TB), pulmonary TB (P-TB) and non-pulmonary TB – seep out, akin to trying to hold sand in one's hand, only to have it slip through one's fingers.

We are in an era of hope where public health discourse has gained importance and technology has narrowed the gaps that were previously unimaginable. The COVID-19 pandemic, despite its disruptive and uncertain nature, has brought to the fore preventive aspects of public health, highlighting social determinants of health in the scheme of things. Despite the passage of World TB Day 2024, looking at rapid urbanisation, migration, and the stresses on the existing health systems, I propose a 10-point agenda towards 'ending TB'.

First, early detection. Given TB's aetiology, early detection is the key. Symptoms are often ignored and mistaken for other common ailments, leading to delays in reporting. Compulsory screening for family and contacts of each index case is essential, necessitating availability of laboratory facilities and efficient follow-up mechanisms within health systems.

Second, precise treatment categorisation. With increasing DR-TB, it is imperative to know the resistance status at the time of diagnosis to assign appropriate treatment regimens as per their phenotypic susceptibility.

Third, treatment adherence and follow-up. Unlike other bacterial diseases, TB requires a long period of sustained treatment. Often, this leads to non-compliance, which could be due to observable improvement in health status, or change of residence, movement across States and districts. Even though the TB control programme has a built-in follow-up system, compliance to complete treatment is not 100%. Leveraging technology to monitor compliance needs focus.

Fourth, zero mortality. Mitigating mortality due to TB, be it DR-TB or non-pulmonary TB, is necessary.

Issue of drug resistance

Fifth, controlling drug resistance. Drug resistance in TB remains a man-made phenomenon. Unregulated use of antibiotics and non-compliance with treatment regimens lead to selective evolutionary pressure on the bacillus, in turn resulting in developing drug resistance. Poor regulatory mechanisms for drug control and non-compliance with treatment regimens are the main reasons for such a high degree of drug resistance.

Sixth, assessing the extent of drug-resistant TB. There needs to be data on the proportion of people diagnosed with TB who have rifampicin-resistant TB (RR-TB) and multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) – this is resistance to both rifampicin and isoniazid, collectively referred to as MDR/RR-TB. This helps in better plan and design of the control programme, resource allocation for diagnosis, the treatment regime as well as availability of trained staff mandated for DR-TB.

Seventh, availability of appropriate medicines. Assured medical supply is mandated under the TB control programme. However, procurement challenges for DR-TB medications such as bedaquiline and delamanid must be addressed, in addition to ascertaining treatment facilities for all DR-TB cases which require in-patient care.

Integration of intra-systems

Eighth, integration into larger health systems. Strengthening referral networks within and between different levels of public health systems and private health systems is vital to ensure no symptomatic cases are lost, no patients miss their dosages and are non-compliant, and, importantly, the screening of contacts for all positive cases of pulmonary TB cases (DR or non-DR).

Ninth, dynamic notification system. A robust notification system will ease the burden of health system personnel. While Ni-kshay has evolved – '*Ni-Kshay*-(*Ni*=End, *Kshay*=TB) is the web enabled patient management system for TB control under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)' – it requires improvements to capture real-time TB data between sectors, practitioners, time, and locations.

Tenth, considering population mobility and migration. Often, the productive aspects of life are overlooked when discussing disease and health care seeking, particularly in the context of TB, which suffers from social and cultural stigma. Interestingly, once TB is diagnosed and positive cases are put on treatment, health is restored quickly for the patient to resume their daily activities. Therefore, portability of TB treatment within the country is crucial at the policy level.

Let us pledge to create a TB-free India and world. With early diagnosis and continuous treatment accessible to all, we can achieve the goal of 'Yes! We have ended TB!'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Moscow shooting

It is shocking and most disturbing that a country that has been engaged in a protracted war with Ukraine, and which has already resulted in large-scale casualties, finds itself the target of terror attacks (Page 1, "133 killed in Moscow concert hall shooting; 11 detained, says Putin", March 24). That a relatively peaceful country which is considered to be a global superpower had to bear the brunt of a deadly terror attack in recent times is a grim pointer to the fact that the menace of terrorism transcends nations and nationalities. Violence and bloodshed are totally unacceptable and antithetical to the ethos of a civilised world order.

B. Suresh Kumar,
Coimbatore

Like-minded countries across the world should join hands in rooting out terrorism in all its forms and formats. We should not be carried away or fooled by claims that the IS is a spent force. The outfit seems to take different shapes and/or incarnations from time to time.

R. Sampath,
Chennai

The arrest of a CM

The arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raises serious questions about political vendetta and the misuse of investigative agencies. The timing, just ahead of the general election, strengthens the suspicion. When a sitting Chief Minister faces arrest, it undermines public trust. We must safeguard our democratic institutions from undue influence and uphold the right to dissent. Mr. Kejriwal's arrest is not about one individual. It is about the soul of our democracy. Let us demand clarity, fairness, and an adherence to constitutional norms.

Sam Oommen,
Venmoney, Chengannur, Kerala

That those facing corruption charges are left/let off the moment they join hands with the ruling national party is a known fact. The question arising in everyone's mind is whether Mr. Kejriwal can continue as the Chief Minister of Delhi while behind bars. Only legal eagles can answer this sensitive question.

Mani Nataraajan,
Chennai

It is surprising to note that some in the media have chosen to ignore certain vital facts leading to the arrest of Mr. Kejriwal. First, his blatant defiance to comply with as many as nine summons issued by the ED. His desperate efforts in getting protection from arrest failed. One of his Ministers is still in custody and all his attempts to get bail have failed. There seems to be enough material to back the allegations in the liquor policy. Mr. Kejriwal has only himself to blame himself for the situation he is in.

A. Sundararajan,
Chennai

Title, disharmony

As a connoisseur of Carnatic music, I am saddened by the war cries being raised against a fellow musician. Why such hatred? The head of the Music Academy had issued a proper response. Disgruntled musicians and past awardees should ponder over their actions.

P.A.K. Murthy,
Chennai

One is entitled to one's opinion that he or she is free to express in public as a basic constitutional right bestowed to the person exercising this right. But if it turns controversial and snowballs into an issue that deeply hurts the sentiments of others, causing disharmony, it is tantamount to abuse of the right. T.M. Krishna is, unquestionably, an accomplished artiste, But what is disconcerting about him is his adopting a dual role, ideologically contradictory to each other, as a Carnatic musician. Playing this dual role before very learned and informed people in this genre is despicable. The actions by some fellow Carnatic musicians are fair in their stand as they have a profound understanding of classical music.

N. Visveswaran,
Chennai

CSK off the blocks

Compliments to CSK to start this IPL on a winning note. There was no bite in the RCB bowling. It was a grand show at Chepauk and we expect the fireworks to continue through the IPL.

N. Mahadevan,
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

The right diagnosis for tuberculosis

Sarabjit Chadha

is Regional Technical Director, India and South-East Asia at FIND

Tuberculosis, commonly known as TB, is a disease which continues to impact millions globally. Ending the TB epidemic by 2030 is among the health targets of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India is working towards eliminating TB five years ahead of the global 2030 target. This is an ambitious time frame. How well-positioned is India to achieve this?

A macro view suggests that India has done exceptionally well so far. A strong political intent is driving the right policies. In fact, in November 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged India's success on two major fronts: in reducing TB incidence by 16% from 2015 to 2022 (close to double the pace at which global TB incidence is declining) and in reducing TB mortality by 18% during the same period, keeping in line with the global trend.

The weakest aspect

However, as Dr. Madhukar Pai, Dr. Puneet K. Dewan, and Dr. Soumya Swaminathan pointed out in 'Transforming tuberculosis diagnosis' in *Nature*, globally, diagnosis continues to be the "weakest aspect of TB care". According to the WHO's 'Global Tuberculosis Report 2023', for the first time globally, 7.5 million patients were diagnosed with TB in 2022; yet there remained a large gap of some 3.1 million people who probably fell ill with TB but were not diagnosed and reported to national TB programmes. As the article surmised succinctly, "If we cannot find TB, we cannot treat TB. And if we cannot treat TB, we cannot end TB".

So, how do we find TB? We can detect it largely by leveraging and optimising the systems and processes already in place, as well as by quickly deploying newer proven technologies that take diagnosis as close to the point of care as possible.

Take, for instance, the first step of screening patients: India regularly conducts active case-finding drives across the country. But it will be useful to reassess the screening procedures in place. A recent Lancet study as well as the Indian Council of Medical Research's 'National TB Prevalence Survey in India' showed that while screening people for symptoms is good, it is not substantive. Studies also show that in many cases, despite not showing any apparent symptoms, people may have infectious TB and may even be transmitting it.

X-ray imaging is a quick and efficient way to find these patients. X-ray technology has advanced dramatically. Now, we not only have portable hand-held devices, but also software driven by Artificial Intelligence that can read digital X-ray images and detect possible TB with a high degree of certainty. This must be used on a wider scale so that we can find and absorb potential patients into the care cascade faster.

The TB fight

While X-rays are good screening tools, it is imperative to detect TB bacteria in the patient with absolute certainty. The age-old sputum microscopy test has its limitations which are addressed by the newer molecular tests that are rapid, accurate, and even detect resistance against drugs. To be sure, India has scaled up molecular diagnostic capacity significantly. The NAAT (nucleic acid amplification test) machines in India have gone up from 651 in 2017 to more than 5,000 in 2022. But the utility of these tests is limited due to their high costs and issues with accessibility. Moreover, a large number of existing technologies including molecular testing are reliant on sputum collection and testing. This comes with its own challenges. First, it may not be as easy for everyone, especially young children, to produce sputum. Second, sample transportation, especially in remote and hilly districts, remains a challenge. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when an alternative to nasopharyngeal swabs was introduced in the form of simpler nasal swabs, saliva, and self-collection, the testing coverage greatly increased. We must therefore be on the lookout for newer technologies and approaches to diagnosis.

We can detect TB largely by leveraging the systems already in place, as well as by quickly deploying newer proven technologies

Other collection techniques

It is time to actively explore other collection techniques such as tongue swabs which can be a true game changer. Here, the sample is extracted by simply rubbing the swab in the oral cavity. This augments our point-of-care testing abilities and also reduces the costs for overall diagnosis of TB. We could also better utilise another invaluable resource: PCR machines, which served us well during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are already fitted with the right diagnostic technology and can get to the last mile across the country effectively. Newer technologies such as the urine LAM test can also be used to detect cases in the general population effectively. This is a rapid test which is easily performed. It can help in screening for both pulmonary TB (lungs) and extra-pulmonary TB (organs other than the lungs).

The TB diagnostics pipeline is rich with several new innovative tests on the anvil. However, to maximise these tests, their rapid validation and adoption under the programme is critical. To ensure we truly reach the last mile, point-of-care testing and diagnosis is imperative. The good news is we already have a diagnostic framework that is forward-looking. We need to simply improve implementation and be more proactive in deploying new technologies. We need to ensure that new technologies are streamlined and rolled out faster and build capacity at the sub-district level to conduct such tests as needed. Minor re-adjustments will make a major contribution to India's TB elimination drive.

Things fall apart; can AAP hold?

Kejriwal's arrest has put the AAP in a difficult position and the Congress in a quandary

STATE OF PLAY

Jaideep Deo Bhanj
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Politics in the national capital has come a full circle with the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on corruption charges by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Mr. Kejriwal, who rose to power a decade ago by launching scathing attacks over corruption against the Congress, and particularly former Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, now finds himself having to prove his and his party's "*kattar imandar*" (very honest) credentials and that too from prison.

An uneasy alliance

While Mr. Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) faces its biggest challenge yet, just before the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress too finds itself in a predicament. The party, which ruled Delhi for 15 years before the AAP rode to power in 2015, has no seats in the Delhi Legislative Assembly and no representation from Delhi in Parliament. In this context, the 4-3 seat-sharing arrangement for Delhi's seven Lok Sabha seats under the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc can be seen as an attempt by the Congress to stay in the political mix in Delhi. This alliance is an uneasy one, however, given that the two parties are rivals elsewhere. In Punjab, for instance, the AAP and Congress have chosen to fight it alone; this is where the AAP came to power defeating the Congress in 2022. While the cadre of both the parties are still awaiting instructions from their leadership on how they plan to support each other after being bitter rivals for so many years, the factor that

unites them is a dominant opponent in the form of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

On the night of March 21, when the ED whisked away Mr. Kejriwal from outside his residence, it was Ms. Dikshit's son Sandeep Dikshit, a vociferous critic of Mr. Kejriwal, who was present outside his house, along with other Congress leaders, expressing solidarity and calling the arrest "illegal". The irony is that the alleged Delhi liquor scam that is being probed by Central agencies was an issue that was raked up by the Congress. In 2022, Ch. Anil Kumar, who was the Delhi Congress president, was among the first to file a complaint with the Delhi Police alleging a "multi-crore" scam in the formation and implementation of the policy. Other Congress leaders such as party treasurer Ajay Maken have also raised allegations of corruption against Mr. Kejriwal, attacking him for spending public funds on building a lavish residence and office.

Reacting to Mr. Kejriwal's arrest, Congress leader and former President of India Pranab Mukherjee's daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee posted on X (formerly Twitter) that "karma catches up". She said, "He and [the] Anna Hazare gang were responsible for making [the] most irresponsible, baseless and wild allegations against [the] Congress including Sheila Dikshit saying he has "trunk loads" of evidence against her. No one has seen the 'trunk' so far."

However, leaders from both parties have said that they will respect the "alliance dharma" and put aside their differences to fight the BJP. They believe that they will have a mathematical advantage if they do not split the anti-BJP votes.

Jubilance in BJP

Meanwhile, the BJP remains confident. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while addressing an event in Delhi's Dwarka recently, commented on the alliance saying "0+0 is still zero" and expressed confidence that the BJP will win all seven seats for a third consecutive time. The mood at a Holi Milan organised in the Delhi BJP office a day after the arrest of Mr. Kejriwal was jubilant with leaders saying corruption has been "slayed" as Mr. Kejriwal, his former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, former Health Minister Satyendar Jain, and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh are all in jail.

The AAP has spent the weekend reacting angrily to Mr. Kejriwal's arrest. It has deputed Cabinet Ministers Atishi, Saurabh Bharadwaj, and Gopal Rai to take stock of the situation along with Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak. All of them have been reiterating that Mr. Kejriwal will continue to be the Chief Minster even if he is in jail. The Congress is yet to announce its candidates for its three seats. Meetings on how both these parties are going to tackle the elections are yet to be conducted. On March 31, the AAP, Congress, and other Opposition parties are scheduled to hold a rally at Ramlila Maidan against Mr. Kejriwal's arrest. Mr. Kejriwal, who has often publicly called top leaders of the parties that will be present at the rally "corrupt", will find solace in seeing them show up for him.

Charting women's trajectory in parliaments globally

As of 2022, in close to 60 countries, the share of women in parliament was 20% or less

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

The year 2024 is being hailed as the biggest year for democracy, with 45% of the global population preparing to exercise their voting rights or having already cast their ballots. It thus becomes imperative to assess how women are represented in politics and and leadership roles.

Women's representation in political spheres improved in the latter half of the 20th century, with significant progress made in many nations in securing voting rights and parliamentary seats, and in climbing to the highest political offices. However, this has been uneven. And despite substantial gains, women continue to constitute a minority in most parliamentary bodies and are rarely seen in top political leadership positions.

Data compiled by political scientist Svend-Erik Skaaning and colleagues show that until the mid-19th century, universal suffrage was virtually non-existent for both men and women across the world **(Chart 1)**. However, a stark divergence then emerged, as men in certain nations were granted voting rights while women were excluded. New Zealand broke this pattern by extending universal suffrage to women in 1893.

The gap between male and female political participation widened in the early 20th century, despite women gaining suffrage in more countries, as men's voting rights expanded even further. By the onset of World War II, men had the right to vote in one out of three countries, while women did in only one out of six countries.

The gap then rapidly closed when the voting rights discrimination against women ended in many countries, and both women and men gained the right to vote in many others. **Chart 1** shows the share of countries where both men and women have the right to vote, the share of countries where only men have the right to vote, and the share of countries where there is no universal right to vote.

In the early 20th century, women were largely absent from national parliaments, according to data based on the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project. Norway first saw women enter parliament in 1907; nearly 10% of the country's parliamentary seats were occupied by women **(Chart 2)**. But the latter half of the 20th century witnessed a significant surge in the number of women entering parliament. This trend accelerated in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Rwanda's parliamentary composition surpassed the 50% mark for women's representation in 2008, setting a remarkable precedent. In the same year, countries such as Argentina, Cuba, Finland, and Sweden had between 40% and 50% women parliamentarians.

However, despite the progress, women's political representation has been limited and uneven. Women make up about half of all the representatives in only a few countries. As of 2022, in close to 60 countries, the share of women in parliament was 20% or less. And in three countries, there are no woman **(Chart 3)**. The chart shows the share of seats in the lower or single chamber of the legislature held by women as of 2022.

While women's representation in parliament is important, so is their representation in a country's highest political office. Data from V-Dem shows that at any given point in time, almost all political chief executives have been men **(Chart 4)**. Here, the term "chief executive" means the head of state or head of government, depending on who has more power. There has been a slight increase in the share of countries led by women in the last three decades. However, the share of countries where woman occupy the post of chief executive is still less than 10%.

Unequal and uneven representation
The charts were sourced from Our World in Data's article titled "Women have made major advances in politics — but the world is still far from equal".
Chart 1: The chart shows the share of countries with universal right to vote. Figures in %
No universal right to vote
Universal right to vote for men only
Universal right to vote for men and women
100
80
60
40
20
0
1789
1900
2022
Chart 2: The chart shows the share of seats in the lower or single chamber of the legislature held by women over time
No women
Less than 10% women
10% - 20%
20% - 30%
30% - 40%
40% - 50%
50% or more
1900
1960
2022
Chart 3: The chart shows the percentage of seats in the lower or single chamber of the legislature held by women as of 2022
0%
0%-10%
10%-20%
20%-30%
30%-40%
40%-50%
>50%
Chart 4: Share of countries by gender of the chief executive
Man is chief executive
Almost all chief executives have been men. Share of women is less than 10% as of 2022
Woman is chief executive
1789
1900
2022

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 25, 1974

Rebel troops' bid to overthrow Amin fails

Kampala, March 24: Rebel troops to-day appeared to have lost a machinegun and mortar battle to overthrow General Idi Amin's military regime. Government information organs remained silent after the fighting ended about dawn, giving rise to speculation that Gen. Amin had fled. But a newsman saw Gen. Amin driving an open, unescorted jeep along Kampala's main street about noon. Several friends were in the jeep with him.

Uganda Radio later broadcast a message said to be from Gen. Amin, asserting that conditions were back to normal. The message blamed the infighting on a false report that an invading force was trying to kill the General and take over the country.

Tanks and armoured cars patrolled Kampala this morning. Most soldiers withdrew to their barracks by mid-afternoon, leaving armed guards of Uganda Radio and the Information Ministry. Groceries were closed and a few civilians were on the streets.

Uganda Radio giving the Government's explanation said military police, members of the Mulire battalion and paratroop students had created "strong points" in Kampala following the false report of an impending invasion.

The broadcast said Gen. Amin spoke to the rebels this morning and told them that the officer who had spread the rumour later shot himself and "the others have run away."

Gen. Amin offered condolences to relatives of soldiers and others killed in the fighting, Uganda Radio said. The radio added that Gen. Amin told the Mulire battalion that if they were dissatisfied with his command, they should kill him or dismiss him, rather than "keep the good people of Kampala up all night running around."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 25, 1924

Compulsory elementary education

A ladies meeting: A large number of ladies met at Madras Hindu Secondary School Washermanpet on Friday last and passed a resolution in support of the introduction of Free and Compulsory Elementary Education for boys and girls in the city of Madras. Miss Jabagnanam B.A. presided at the meeting.

From Page One

INDIA bloc to hold rally against Kejriwal's arrest

The AAP and the other Opposition parties have questioned the ED's action against Mr. Kejriwal, claiming that no money trail has been found in the excise policy case despite a two-year-long investigation. "However, a ₹60 crore money trail has been found. They arrested Sarath Reddy [director of Aurobindo Pharma] in the excise policy case but he was released on the condition that he give a statement against Kejriwal and donate ₹60 crore to the BJP through electoral bonds," Mr. Rai said.

Mr. Reddy was arrested by the Central agency last November in connection with the excise policy case. Recent data released by the State Bank of India (SBI) shows that Aurobindo Pharma had donated ₹60 crore to the BJP via electoral bonds. No comments were available from Mr. Reddy or Aurobindo Pharma regarding the AAP's charges. There was no immediate reaction to the allegations from the BJP either.

Governing from jail

Giving a glimpse into how the Delhi government plans to function with its Chief Minister in judicial custody, Water Minister Atishi read out the first order sent to her from Mr. Kejriwal instructing her to solve water and sewer-related problems in some areas of the city.

"I might be in jail, but people of Delhi shouldn't be inconvenienced...," Mr. Kejriwal said, in the message that Ms. Atishi read out. The Minister claimed that, even in confinement, the CM was committed to serving Delhiites, and had asked her to issue strict directions to the Chief Secretary and Delhi Jal Board officials to prevent public inconvenience during the upcoming summer months.

"I have come to know that there are significant water and sewer problems in some areas of Delhi. I might be in jail, but the people of Delhi shouldn't be inconvenienced; make adequate arrangements for water tankers so that there is no shortage during summer. If necessary, seek the cooperation of the Lieutenant Governor as well. He will surely assist you," read the message.

Kangana, Govil in BJP's fifth list; Varun dropped

The fifth list saw some other prominent additions and drops, including former Army chief and Union Minister General V.K. Singh from Ghaziabad. Just minutes before the list was announced, he recused himself from consideration, perhaps anticipating it. He has been replaced by MLA Atul Garg.

The dropping of Mr. Varun Gandhi, who may yet contest as an Independent, is a big development as he and the BJP's high command have not seen eye to eye on many issues for a long time. No candidate has yet been announced for Rae Bareli.

Veteran leader Santosh Gangwar was also dropped from Bareilly, with Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar replacing him. Interestingly, the BJP has fielded Rajrani Rawat, in place of current MP Upendra Rawat who withdrew after some objectionable videos surfaced, allegedly showing him.

The BJP also dropped three MPs from the 17 seats it is to fight in Bihar. In Buxar, Mithilesh Tiwari will replace Ashwani Choubey; in Muzzaffarpur, Raj Bhushan Nishad will replace Ajay Nishad; and in Sasaram, Shivesh Ram will replace sitting MP Chedi Paswan.

In Odisha, the signs of the BJP-Biju Janata Dal (BJD) alliance negotiations collapsing were evident in the list, as the BJP named candidates for 18 out of 21 Lok Sabha seats in the State.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has been fielded from the western Odisha constituency of Sambalpur, marking his return to direct elections in the State after a gap of 15 years. But the fielding of Baijayant Panda, national vice-president of the BJP, who had earlier won the Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat as a Biju Janata Dal candidate, is significant as he and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik have been at odds.

National spokespersons Aparajita Sarangi and Sambit Patra have been renominated by the party for the Bhubaneswar and Puri Lok Sabha constituencies, respectively. The BJP has dropped four sitting MPs in Odisha, including Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Bishweswar Tudu from the Mayurbhanj constituency.

In Haryana, hours after two-time Congress MP and industrialist Naveen Jindal and Independent MLA Ranjit Singh Chautala, who is also a State Cabinet Minister, joined the BJP, the two figured in the party's list for Lok Sabha candidates, bagging ticket for Kurukshetra and Hisar respectively. While the BJP's incumbent Kurukshetra MP Nayab Saini took over as the party's new Chief Minister earlier this month, the party's Hisar Lok Sabha MP Brijendra Singh quit the BJP to join the Congress a few days ago.

In West Bengal, the BJP announced names for 19 seats, meaning that candidates have now been named for 38 out of the 42 seats in the State. Significant names include former High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay from Tamluk. Another debutant is Rekha Patra, a Sandeshkhali villager who was the first to lodge a complaint against Trinamool leaders there and is now being fielded as the BJP's candidate from Basirhat.

The Christian dominated seat of South Goa will see Pallavi Sriniwas Dempo, wife of the owner of the Dempo industrial group Sriniwas Dempo, in the fray. In Jharkhand, Sita Soren, the daughter-in-law of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha founder Shibu Soren, will contest from Dumka, a seat that Mr. Soren used to contest from.

In Andhra Pradesh, the BJP has fielded Kiran Kumar Reddy, the last CM of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh, as its candidate from Rajampet.

Pakistan to mull revival of trade ties with India

Pakistan Foreign Minister says businessmen in his country approached him on the issue; Amritsar traders welcome move; Jaishankar says India in 'no mood' to overlook issue of terrorism

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

> What India did in 2019, the steps they took to amend the constitution and law [abrogation of Article 370], that was very painful
>
> **MOHAMMAD ISHAQ DAR**
> Pakistani Foreign Minister

Pakistan will "seriously examine" whether to restart trade with India, said its newly appointed Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar. Responding to questions during a press meet in London, Mr. Dar said he had been approached last year by Pakistani businesspersons over the issue, and said any decision would follow a full discussion with all stakeholders.

Meanwhile, visiting Singapore, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar hit out at Pakistan for its "industry-level" support to terrorism, stressing that any talks with Pakistan would need to "face up to the problem".

In 2019, both India and Pakistan had taken trade measures against each other – after the Pulwama bombing in February, India had withdrawn the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan and raised tariffs on all trade multi-fold; after India's Article 370 moves in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019, Pakistan had suspended direct trade ties with India amidst a number of other diplomatic measures.

The closure of trade had mostly affected businessmen and transporters engaged at the Attari-Wagah land border. On Sunday, the Amritsar-based chamber of commerce expressed hope that a rethink would follow after the Pakistani Foreign Minister's comments, calling on New Delhi to reciprocate.

"What India did in 2019, the steps they took to amend the constitution and law, that was very painful," said Mr. Dar, speaking in London on Saturday, where he referred to UN resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir. "But I think the business community of Pakistan is very keen [to restart trade]. When I presented the budget as Finance Minister last year, businessmen pointed out that the imports [from India] are coming in even today – they come via Dubai or via Singapore and involve higher freight, transshipment and other transportation costs," he added.

No comment

The Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on Mr. Dar's remarks. Speaking at the National University in Singapore at an event about his book, *Why Bharat Matters*, Mr. Jaishankar said that in India, the "mood is not to overlook" terrorism.

"It's not a one-off happening...but very sustained, almost at an industry level, an assembly line of people whose job it is to do bad things [terror]," Mr. Jaishankar had said on Saturday, responding to a question about bilateral ties with Pakistan. "India will not skirt this problem anymore. We are not going to say... [terrorism] happened, [but] let's continue our dialogue because that's very important... We must be honest enough to face up to that problem, however difficult it is."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the Amritsar-based Director of the Confederation of International Chamber of Commerce and Industry "welcomed" Mr. Dar's initiatives for discussions on restarting trade and said the suspension had left the Integrated Check Point at Attari built at considerable investment "idle".

"We strongly urge the Indian government to react with positive intent as normal economic activity would be mutually beneficial to both the nations," businessman Ashok Sethi said.

(With inputs from Vikas Vasudeva in Chandigarh)

India, Russia have always had positive ties, says Jaishankar

Press Trust of India
SINGAPORE

S. Jaishankar

Russia is a country with which India has always had a positive relationship and both countries have taken extra care to look after each other's interests, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Sunday, as he dismissed the notion that Moscow was drifting towards China.

Interacting with the Indian community in Singapore, Mr. Jaishankar said India should look at its relationship with Russia or any other country from its perspective.

"So, tell me, has Russia helped us or harmed us? Has Russia at crucial moments contributed or obstructed? Going ahead, are there gains to be made from Russia or is it only damages which will come out?" he asked.

"So, if I do my calculations from my perspective and my experiences, I will get the answer. And the answer in this case is that Russia is a country with which we have always had a positive relationship," he said.

"Both India and Russia have taken that extra care to look after each other's interests. So, I think we should have that confidence as we go forward," he said while answering a question.

The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

On a question on the U.S. presidential election in November and India's equation with the country after that, Mr. Jaishankar said, "I prefer to be patient." He said that he was confident that India could get along with whoever was President of the U.S.

Mr. Jaishankar is in Singapore on a three-day visit from Sunday.

Myanmar group asks Manipur govt. not to deport refugees

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A Myanmar-based organisation has asked the Manipur government not to deport Myanmar refugees back to the war-torn country unless they choose to return. They say people returning were likely to face conscription.

The Nongthombam Biren Singh government began the process of sending back 77 refugees from Myanmar by deporting eight of them on March 8.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Burma Refugees Committee - Kabaw Valley said they feared that they would be handed over to the military junta.

The organisation said that Myanmar imposed the People's Military Service Law on February 10.

"We are extremely worried that handing the Myanmar nationals over to the junta would prompt the military regime to use them as human shields on the battlefields," it said.

Urging the Manipur government to reconsider the deportation plan on socio-political and humanitarian grounds, the organisation hoped the Myanmar nationals would be given a choice between staying in Manipur temporarily or risking conscription by returning home. "We would also request the Manipur government for consideration allowing them to stay temporarily in the border areas after being released from the detention centre till they can safely return to their homes," it said.

'Muslims in Assam must give up polygamy, child marriage'

Press Trust of India
GUWAHATI

Himanta Biswa Sarma

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has asserted that Bengali-speaking Muslims must forsake practices like child marriage and polygamy to be considered *khilonjiya* – indigenous people of the State.

Mr. Sarma had also previously held the Bengali-speaking Muslim community of the State, most of whom have roots in Bangladesh, responsible for these social evils.

"Whether *Miyas* (Bengali-speaking Muslims) are indigenous or not is a different matter. What we are saying is that if they try to be 'indigenous', we have no problem. But for that, they have to forsake child marriage and polygamy, and encourage women's education," Mr. Sarma said on Saturday.

Miya is originally a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam and the non-Bengali speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. In recent years, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

He said the Assamese people have a culture in which girls were compared to '*shakti*' (goddess), and marrying two-three times was not Assamese culture.

"I always tell them, there is no problem in *Miyas* being indigenous. But they cannot have two-three wives. That is not Assamese culture. How can one encroach *Satra* (Vaishnavite monastery) land and want to be indigenous?" he maintained.

The State government had launched an intensive crackdown against child marriage in two phases last year and it was found that many elderly men married multiple times and their wives were mostly young girls, belonging to the poor section of the society, Mr. Sarma had said earlier.

The Opposition had termed the decision as a move to polarise voters ahead of Lok Sabha elections.

CBI returns to Sandeshkhali for probe in ED attack case

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team, probing an attack on Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials at West Bengal's Sandeshkhali on January 5, on Sunday visited a village in the area to gather more evidence.

This was the second visit of the CBI to Sarberia village in North 24 Parganas district after getting the custody of suspended Trinamool Congress leader Shajahan Sheikh, the main accused in the attack, on March 6.

This time, the CBI team took two of the arrested persons along with them to reconstruct the incident and collect further evidence, officials said.

Rajnath Singh celebrates Holi with soldiers in Leh, lauds their bravery

Press Trust of India
LEH

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday celebrated Holi with Army jawans in Leh and lauded them for protecting the country from enemies while braving extreme weather conditions.

Mr. Singh was earlier supposed to celebrate Holi with soldiers in Siachen, the world's highest battlefield, but his visit was cancelled due to inclement weather. The Minister was accompanied by the Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande and General Officer Commanding, Fire and Fury Corps, Lt. Gen Rashim Bali.

The Defence Minister applied *tilak* with '*gulal*' on soldiers' foreheads. He also laid a wreath at the War Memorial here to pay tributes to soldiers who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Happy Holi: Rajnath Singh dabbles in colour during celebrations with Armed Forces personnel, in Leh on Sunday. PTI

Addressing the soldiers after celebrating the festival of colours, Mr. Singh said Ladakh was the national capital of courage and bravery.

"Like we have the national capital in Delhi, the economic capital in Mumbai, and the technological capital in Bengaluru, Ladakh is India's capital of courage and bravery.

"When everyone wants to hide in their homes due to extreme weather conditions, you stand up to protect the country from its enemies with unwavering willpower," he said.

The country will always be indebted to the soldiers for their devotion and service. The commitment of the soldiers posted in high altitudes is much stronger than the sub-zero temperatures, the Minister said.

Mr. Singh reiterated the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Central government's commitment to the welfare of the armed forces and their families.

"It is our duty to take care of you, your children and parents. Our government is always working for the forces of the country with the same zeal with which you are working for this country," he said.

When he took over as the Defence Minister five years ago, Mr. Singh said, he visited Siachen first.

"Today, it was not possible to go to Siachen due to bad weather. Therefore, I wish a happy Holi to all soldiers deployed there," he said, adding that playing Holi with jawans was one of the happiest moments for him.

Later, Mr. Singh spoke with soldiers in Siachen over the phone and extended Holi greetings to them. He told them that he would soon visit Siachen and interact with them.

Statehood for Ladakh: KDA begins three-day hunger strike in Kargil

Press Trust of India
KARGIL

Demonstrators attend a three-day protest to push for constitutional safeguards.

A three-day hunger strike by the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) in support of their four-point demands, including Statehood and Ladakh's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, commenced in Kargil on Sunday, with people from different walks of life joining the symbolic protest against the Central government.

Separately, the hunger strike led by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk in Leh entered the 19th day as he expressed his displeasure over the "breach of trust" by the Union Home Ministry amid a deadlock over the talks between the representatives of the Leh-based Apex Body and the government.

The KDA and the Apex Body, both separate groupings of various political, social and religious organisations representing the two districts, are jointly spearheading the agitation in support of their demands, which also include job reservation for local youth and one Rajya Sabha seat. The agitation was launched shortly after Ladakh was granted Union Territory status without an Assembly in August 2019.

BSP declares 25 candidates for Lok Sabha election

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Sunday declared 25 candidates for the 2024 Lok Sabha election in Uttar Pradesh.

The party gave Mohammad Irfan Saifi a ticket from Moradabad, Mujahid Hussain from Amroha, Majid Ali from Saharanpur, Zeeshan Khan from Rampur, Anis Ahmad Khan alias Phool Babu from Pilibhit, Shaukat Ali from Sambhal, and Abid Ali from Aonla, etc.

The BSP ticket distribution focused on Muslim outreach with seven out of 25 candidates hailing from the minority community. The BSP, a Dalit-centric party, denied tickets to two sitting Lok Sabha members – Haji Fazlur Rehman from Saharanpur and Malook Nagar from Bijnor. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BSP contested 37 parliamentary seats in an alliance with Samajwadi Party and won 10 seats – Saharanpur, Bijnor, Nagina, Amroha, Ambedkar Nagar, Shravasti, Lalganj, Ghosi, Janupur, and Ghazipur.

Uttar Pradesh is politically the most crucial State in India with 80 Lok Sabha seats.

JD(U) releases list of 16 candidates, drops 2 MPs

Six of the candidates in Bihar are from the Other Backward Classes and five from the Extremely Backward Classes; the party has also given ticket to turncoats Lovely Anand and Vijay Lakshmi

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

The Janata Dal(U) on Sunday released a list of 16 candidates for the Lok Sabha election, and provided a caste break-up, in a reflection of the impact that last year's caste census has had on the State's politics. Two MPs have been dropped, while two turncoats have been given ticket, with preference given to backward class leaders.

Six of the 16 candidates are from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and five from the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), which together comprise 63% of Bihar's population; three candidates are from upper castes, which make up only 15% of the population; and one each from Mahadalit and Muslim communities. Two of the candidates are women.

In the seat-sharing deal within the State's ruling National Democratic Alliance, the BJP was allotted 17 seats, while the JD(U) got 16, and the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) got five. The Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) and the Rashtriya Lok Morcha were each allocated one seat of the State's 40 Lok Sabha seats. HAM(S) chief Jitan Ram Manjhi and RLM president Upendra Kushwaha are likely to contest from the Gaya and Karakat parliamentary seats, respectively.

Gearing up: Senior JD(U) leaders release the full list of 16 candidates for the Lok Sabha election, in Patna on Sunday. PTI

2 MPs dropped

In 2019, the NDA had swept the election in Bihar, winning 53% of votes and 39 of the State's 40 seats. The BJP and JD(U) had contested 17 seats each, leaving six seats to the then-undivided Lok Janshakti Party. The JD(U) had lost the lone seat of Kishanganj to the Congress.

This time round, the JD (U) has decided to drop two MPs: Kavita Singh from Siwan and Sunil Kumar Pintu from Sitamarhi. Two turncoats – Lovely Anand, who recently joined the JD(U) from the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD); and Vijay Lakshmi Kushwaha, the wife of Ramesh Singh Kushwaha, former RLM MLA from Ziradei, who has returned to the JD (U) – have been given ticket from the Sheohar and Siwan Lok Sabha seats, respectively.

In 2019, BJP leader Rama Devi had won the Sheohar Lok Sabha seat, but as the constituency has been allocated to the JD(U) this time, the party has fielded Ms. Anand, wife of Anand Mohan Singh, an upper caste strongman from the Kosi area.

New and old faces

In the Sitamarhi seat, JD(U) leader and chairman of the Bihar Legislative Council Devesh Chandra Thakur has been fielded in place of MP Sunil Kumar Pintu. Mr. Pintu is currently a JD(U) member, but was earlier in the BJP. From Kishanganj, the JD(U) has fielded Mujahid Alam, who was earlier the MLA from Kochadhaman, but had been defeated in the 2020 Assembly election by All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen MLA Izhar Asfi. Apart from these four, the remaining 12 are JD(U) MPs, who are being fielded again.

Meanwhile, in the Opposition *Mahagatbandhan* camp, RJD leaders Lalu Prasad Yadav and his younger son Tejashwi Yadav are scheduled to reach Delhi by Sunday evening for a final round of talks with their ally, the Congress. RJD sources told *The Hindu* that it was willing to spare six seats, while Congress was demanding nine.

INDIA intact, will cross 272 seats: Jairam Ramesh

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The INDIA bloc is intact despite Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's "somersault" and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee deciding to be Mamata Banerjee, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh has said, rejecting as "hollow" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pitch against the Opposition on corruption.

In an interaction with editors of the *Press Trust of India*, he said the Opposition will unitedly cross the halfway mark of 272 in the elections, and oust the BJP from power.

Mr. Ramesh spoke on a range of issues, including electoral bonds, the arrests of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader Hemant Soren and also addressed speculations around Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra potentially contesting the Lok Sabha election from Amethi and Raebareli, respectively.

On Opposition unity, he said all 28 parties were together up to December 19, "but Nitish Kumar did a somersault and Mamata Banerjee decided to be Mamata Banerjee".

INBRIEF

Ex-IAF chief, ex-YSRCP leader join BJP ahead of LS election

Former Indian Air Force (IAF) chief R.K.S Bhadauria joined the BJP on Sunday along with former MP and YSRCP leader Varaprasad Rao in the presence of Union Minister Anurag Thakur and party general secretary Vinod Tawde. Mr. Rao, a leader hailing from Tirupati, is likely to get BJP ticket from that seat as part of the party's seat-sharing agreement with the Telugu Desam Party and Jana Sena Party. The former Air Chief, who is being considered for a seat in Uttar Pradesh, said his new innings gave him a chance to contribute to nation-building. He termed the last eight to 10 years of his service as a "golden period", praising the steps taken by the Modi government to boost self-reliance.

Jarange asks Marathas to select candidates for LS poll

Quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil on Sunday appealed to the Maratha community to choose 'Independent' candidates for the Lok Sabha election before March 30. The Maratha community holds sway over 17 to 18 Lok Sabha constituencies in Maharashtra, he claimed. With their influence, they can garner the support of not only Muslims and Dalit communities but also a wider section of the society, Mr. Jarange-Patil said, addressing a meeting of the Maratha community members, who had come from across the State, in Jalna district. Elections to the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra will be held in five phases. "I don't know politics and am not interested in it," Mr. Jarange-Patil said. He said the Maratha community members should choose candidates, irrespective of caste and religion and those not belonging to any political party. PTI

Chirag Paswan's party to announce LS candidates

National Democratic Alliance (NDA) ally Chirag Paswan on Sunday said his Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) will declare its candidates for the Lok Sabha election "immediately after Holi". Mr. Chirag, whose party has got five of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in Bihar, also said he was "ready for any challenge" that came from his estranged uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras. "We will announce all our candidates in a few days... immediately after Holi," said Mr. Paswan, but evaded a direct reply to the question whether he would accommodate Veena Devi and Mehboob Ali Kaiser.

BJP will win Inner Manipur LS seat by huge margin: Biren

Asserting that the BJP has "opened the eyes of people" of the northeast, Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Sunday said the saffron party would win the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat by a massive margin. He said the BJP candidate for the seat would be known by Monday. "The BJP will win by a huge margin... Earlier speeches and qualifications mattered, but now, what is important is those who truly love the community and the land," he said. "The BJP has opened the eyes of people of the entire northeast. The winnability of the party is 200%," claimed the Chief Minister. The State has two Lok Sabha seats – Inner Manipur and Outer Manipur. Manipur will go to polls in two phases – on April 19 and April 26.

SP changes Bijnor candidate, fields Hasan from Moradabad

The Samajwadi Party on Sunday renominated its Lok Sabha MP from Moradabad, S.T. Hasan, from the same seat and changed its Bijnor candidate by fielding Deepak Saini, the son of a party MLA. The party announced the names in a post on X. The Samajwadi Party had earlier named Yashveer Singh as its candidate from Bijnor. However, on Sunday, it named Mr. Saini as its candidate for the seat. He is the son of Ram Avtar Saini, the SP legislator from the Noorpur Assembly segment that comes under the Bijnor parliamentary constituency. The Samajwadi Party has so far released seven lists, announcing candidates for 48 seats. PTI

Trinamool turncoats, Sandeshkhali victim in BJP's Bengal list

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The second list of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates in West Bengal for the upcoming Lok Sabha election comprised a mixed bag, including former Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, two turncoats from the Trinamool Congress, and a woman from Sandeshkhali who was at the receiving end of the violence.

Former Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, who resigned from the Calcutta High Court recently, has been nominated from the Tamluk Lok Sabha seat. The party has fielded Arjun Singh from Barrackpore, and Tapas Roy from Kolkata Uttar. Both Mr. Singh and Mr. Roy had quit the Trinamool Congress to join the BJP recently.

Mr. Gangopadhyay will take on Trinamool Congress youth leader Debangshu Bhattacharya at Tamluk, while Mr. Roy will be pitted against veteran Trinamool Congress MP Sudip Banerjee from Kolkata Uttar. Mr. Singh will be contesting against State's Minister and Trinamool Congress leader Partha Bhowmick from Barrackpore.

The woman from Sandeshkhali, who suffered violence allegedly at the hands of the local Trinamool Congress, has been fielded from the Basirhat Lok Sabha seat.

Eye on details

Briefing time: Women polling officials attend a training programme on electronic voting machines and election-related information at Dispur College in Guwahati on Sunday. RITU RAJ KONWR

Cong. drops Sunil Sharma from Jaipur City seat, fields Pratap Singh after uproar

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Sunil Sharma has been associated with Jaipur Dialogues, a right-wing forum known to ridicule Congress leadership

Following a political uproar over its choice of candidate for the Jaipur City Lok Sabha seat, the Congress on Sunday dropped Sunil Sharma and fielded former Minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas in his place.

Mr. Sharma has been associated with Jaipur Dialogues, a right-wing forum that is known to target and ridicule Congress leadership and target minority communities.

In a fresh list of three names on Sunday, the party fielded Mr. Khachariyawas, a Minister in the Ashok Gehlot government, from Jaipur. The party also named Murari Lal Meena from Dausa seat in Rajasthan. The third candidate, Pratibha Dhanorkar, has been given a party ticket for the Chandrapur seat in Maharashtra to contest.

On Saturday, Shashi Tharoor, senior leader and Lok Sabha member from Thiruvananthapuram, questioned his party's choice from Jaipur on social media. "He must have undergone some sort of Pauline epiphany on the road to 24 Akbar!", he said in a post on X.

While refuting the allegations, Mr. Sharma said he was in no way related to the Jaipur Dialogues YouTube channel or its X handle. He denied being a director of Jaipur Dialogues and asserted that he had severed ties with the platform long back. "This is completely fake news and false propaganda being floated to diminish the prospects of the Congress Party," Mr. Sharma said.

The Jaipur City Lok Sabha seat is considered a stronghold of the Brahmin community, which played a role in the selection of Mr. Sharma. However, his Brahmin identity was overshadowed by the allegations of his direct association with Jaipur Dialogues, as he was a regular participant in the conclaves organised by the platform.

"Jaipur Dialogues YouTube channel invited me to speak on various social issues as per the vision of Congress. I have advocated the noble traditions of India and always opposed religious narrow-mindedness strongly," he said.

Mr. Sharma joined the Congress in 1981 and has held various posts, including general secretary.

Left candidates trounce ABVP in JNU student union elections, win three posts

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Sloganeering accompanied with *dafli* and *dhol* reached a crescendo at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) as the counting for the students' union election progressed on Sunday. As evening fell, the outcome became clearer.

Around 11.30 p.m., the election committee declared that the United Left panel won three posts of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), while the Birsa Ambedkar Phule Students' Association (BAPSA) won one post.

The RSS-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) lost by a few hundred votes in all posts.

The United Left grouping comprises the All India Students' Association (AISA), the Students' Federation of India (SFI), the Democratic Students Federation (DSF), and the All India Students' Federation (AISF).

Eager wait: Students waiting on the JNU campus during the counting of votes on Sunday. ANI

Dhananjay of the AISA won the president's post defeating the ABVP's Umesh Chandra Ajmeera.

Priyanshi Arya, a Dalit queer woman, won the general secretary post. Arya was fielded by the BAPSA. Avijit Ghosh from the SFI won the vice-president post. The joint secretary post was won by Mo Sajid of the AISF. The Left candidate for the general secretary post, Swati Singh, was disqualified on Friday, the day of polling.

The JNU has been a stronghold of the Left parties over the years. However, the ABVP was hoping to change that this year.

The election was held after a four-year hiatus - initially due to the pandemic and later due to Ph.D admissions. Around 5,600 students voted this year.

INBRIEF

Exclude post-2003 items from Bhojshala survey: plea to ASI

A Muslim organisation has approached the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) amid its ongoing survey at the contentious Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Dhar urging it to exclude any items added to the premises post-2003. Following directives from the Madhya Pradesh High Court, the ASI team, accompanied by senior police and administrative officials, continued the survey for the third consecutive day at the disputed complex. "Our objection is that the ASI should not include in the survey the objects put up inside Bhojshala after 2003," the president of Kamal Maula Mosque Welfare Society, Abdul Samad, said. PTI

Nine mosques in U.P. covered with tarpaulin ahead of Holi

At least nine mosques in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh and Sambhal districts have been covered with tarpaulin sheets ahead of Holi to prevent them from being smeared with colours, the police said on Sunday. The step was taken after talks with religious leaders to maintain law and order, police officials said. Circle Officer (City) Abhay Pandey that a flag march had been conducted in the sensitive areas. Additional Superintendent of Police (North) Shrish Chandra said six or seven mosques in Sambhal have been covered with a tarpaulin with mutual consent. PTI

Anti-piracy Act has been a great enabler, says Navy chief

The law empowers Navy and Coast Guard to board, seize, and arrest pirates and their vessels on the high seas; Admiral Kumar says the force has been ensuring 'optimal deployment' of assets

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

The Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, enacted in 2022, has been a "great enabler", said Indian Navy chief Admiral R. Hari Kumar as the Navy completed 100 days of Operation Sankalp in the Gulf of Aden.

"This [the Act] has empowered us to visit, board, search and seize. Any suspicious vessel, craft, or fishing boat or dhow that we suspect, we board, inspect, and if we find piracy triggers like skiffs, weapons, or ammunition, then we take action to ensure that they don't proceed with their mission," Admiral Kumar said in response to a question from *The Hindu* during a press conference on Saturday.

There are very few countries which have an Act like this, he stated.

In the past 100 days, as part of Operation Sankalp, the Navy has carried out over 1,000 boardings.

Admiral Kumar said that earlier they never had any law and it was quite nebulous.

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R. Hari Kumar said that before the new law on piracy was enacted, the situation was quite nebulous. ANI

"In our earlier operations, whenever we captured [pirates], there was hardly any place where you could take them for handing over," he noted, and only the Yellow Gate police station in Mumbai (Mazgaon) was nominated for handling them.

But now all coastal police stations have been empowered.

"We have this anti-piracy Act which has been a great enabler for the security forces, particularly for the Navy, since we are involved in anti-piracy operations," Admiral Kumar said.

Talking about salient features of the Act, maritime expert Pooja Bhatt said the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act empowers the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard to board, seize, and arrest pirates operating on the high seas, in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and beyond, and Indian courts can prosecute the perpetrators with life imprisonment, fine, or both.

"However, the Act also considers the offence as extraditable, where India has signed such treaties with those countries. India has an agreement with Somalia where Somalian pirates have been extradited since 2017," Dr. Bhatt added.

According to the Act, it was enacted "to give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) relating to the repression of piracy on the high seas and for matters connected therewith". India ratified UNCLOS in 1995.

'Addressing threats'

Since mid-December, as part of Phase 2 of Operation Sankalp, the Indian Navy saw the deployment of over 5,000 personnel at sea, over 450 ship days (with over 21 ships deployed), and 900 hours of flying by the maritime surveillance aircraft to address threats in the maritime domain.

"As of yesterday (Friday), we had 11 submarines operating simultaneously in the sea, with more than 35 ships and over five aircraft deployed in different parts of the Indian Ocean Region," Admiral Kumar said adding, "So we are making sure that our assets are deployed in an optimal manner to ensure that it covers the area of interest and gives us the best information so that the maritime domain awareness and the requisite degree of transparency is achieved."

Punjab CM meets kin of Hooch victims as BJP attacks him

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Sunday visited Gujran village in Sangrur district to meet the families of those who died due to suspected consumption of spurious liquor. At least 21 people have died in the incident.

Mr. Mann said the police have registered a murder case in the incident.

"FIR under Section 302 (of the IPC) has been registered against 10 accused. Killing somebody by giving poison is a murder," he said.

The Chief Minister added that those involved in selling spurious liquor will be nabbed.

"We are trying to find out if these accused have more links in Punjab. If there are more gangs selling spurious liquor, they will also be arrested and booked under Section 302," Mr. Mann said.

The Punjab Police said that two more people had been arrested in the case. With this, a total of 10 people have been arrested so far, Deputy Inspector-General (Patiala Range) Harcharan Singh Bhullar said.

Earlier, Union Minister Anurag Thakur hit out at Mr. Mann over the issue.

Anurag Thakur

Addressing a press conference at the BJP's national headquarters in New Delhi, Mr. Thakur said it was shameful that Mr. Mann was stationed in Delhi and did not "utter a word about the incident, nor initiate an investigation".

"Chief Minister Mann stays put in Delhi to what he terms a fight for jailed accused in the excise policy case – Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh, and now Arvind Kejriwal – but when 21 people in his constituency died after consuming illicit liquor, his government is protecting liquor traders," said Mr. Thakur.

He declared that the people of India would never approve of the "somnolent" Punjab government and the Delhi government running from jail.

(With PTI inputs)

Bharat Biotech commences clinical trials of Spanish tuberculosis vaccine in India

N. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD

Clinical trials of the Spanish tuberculosis (TB) vaccine MTBVAC have begun in India.

Vaccine maker Bharat Biotech is conducting the trials in partnership with Spanish biopharmaceutical company Biofabri which is responsible for clinical and industrial development of the vaccine "developed in the laboratory of the University of Zaragoza, with Dr. Brigitte Gicquel of the Pasteur Institute, Paris".

MTBVAC is the only vaccine against tuberculosis undergoing clinical trials based on a genetically modified form of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the pathogen that causes the disease. Unlike the BCG vaccine, the new vaccine contains all "the antigens present in strains that infect humans". While trials to evaluate safety and immunogenicity of MTBVAC in India have begun, a pivotal safety, immunogenicity and efficacy trial is planned in 2025, Bharat Biotech said in an announcement coinciding with World Tuberculosis Day.

MTBVAC has been developed for the prevention of TB in adults and adolescents

Bharat Biotech will be conducting a Phase 3 trial as Biofabri has completed the Phase 1 and 2 trials in other countries, a spokesperson said. "The MTBVAC vaccine has passed several milestones before entering clinical trials in India," executive chairman Krishna Ella said in a release.

Studying the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy of the vaccine in the most populated country and the one with the highest number of cases of the infectious disease is key to continue advancing this vaccine.

MTBVAC has been developed to be a more effective and potentially longer-lasting vaccine than BCG for newborns and for prevention of TB in adults and adolescents, for whom there is currently no effective vaccine, the Hyderabad-based company said. "It is a giant step to test in adults and adolescents in the country where 28% of the world's TB cases accumulate," Biofabri CEO Esteban Rodriguez said.

BCG is an attenuated variant of the bovine TB pathogen and more than a hundred years old with a limited effect on pulmonary tuberculosis that is responsible for the transmission of the disease, he said.

To curb illegal trade, Health Ministry tells States to plug gaps in compiling data of organ donors

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry has expressed concern over some States not compiling data of living and deceased donors which are essential to monitor the implementation of the organ transplantation programme and prevent commercial dealings in organs.

In an advisory to all States recently, the Health Ministry noted that the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), established under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994, was an apex organisation to provide for an efficient and organised system of organ procurement and distribution in the country and maintain a national registry of donors and recipients of organs and tissues, sources in the Transplant Authority of Tamil Nadu said. To fulfil the mandate, the hospitals carrying out organ and tissue transplantation, retrieval, or tissue banking were required to link with the NOTTO and provide both living and deceased organ and tissue donation and transplantation data for the National Registry.

Revise practices: Every transplanting hospital should register patients requiring transplants on the NOTTO web portal.

However, it was observed that data were either incomplete or not provided by the States. Also, some States did not have a system for collecting living donor data.

The Ministry asked State Health Secretaries to instruct all licensed or registered transplant hospitals (Organ Transplant, Non-Transplant Retrieval Centres, and Tissue Banks) to get linked up with the NOTTO web portal.

Every transplanting hospital needed to register patients requiring transplants in the 'subject demography format' as available on the NOTTO web portal and update their status.

The advisory said that it was essential that the data were updated online on a regular basis and monthly offline reports related to deceased as well as living donors were required to be compiled, verified and provided to the NOTTO.

The State Appropriate Authority, which had the powers of a civil court under the Act, was told to ensure compliance with the provision of data by the hospitals for the National Registry.

Non-compliance to the instructions should be dealt with by the authorities under the provisions of the THOTA, 1994.

Robust registry

The Ministry said a robust National Registry was "absolutely essential for better programme implementation and monitoring with the objective to prevent possible commercial dealings in organs and also to promote deceased organ donation," the sources quoted the advisory as saying. It was also desirable that every transplant hospital, whether public or private, promoted deceased organ donation and made efforts to achieve a minimum number of donations annually for which they would be required to establish a system for brain stem death certification and its monitoring, and facility for deceased organ donor maintenance.

The advisory comes after the NOTTO issued a series of instructions to curb allegations of organs harvested from brain dead patients being transplanted on foreign nationals, overlooking deserving Indian patients on the waitlist.

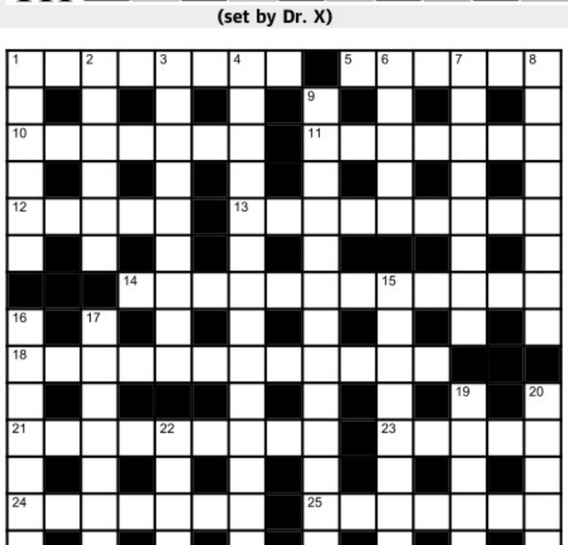
Going by data, 16,041 organs were transplanted in 2022, most of which were kidneys and livers, harvested from live and cadaver donors. Delhi topped the list with 3,818 organ transplants, the sources added.

TH CROSSWORD + 14131

(set by Dr. X)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Accommodation for flyers in club maintained by special brigade (8)
5 Couple in a Rolls-Royce, more pretentious (6)
10 Press covering perfect radio programme (5-2)
11 Swimmer saves lives on island in African country (7)
12 Silly person in European city, losing article (5)
13 Former US President aroused looters accepting suggestion of electoral victory (9)
14 Change the policy to gather data relating to evolutionary development (12)
18 Traitor caught! Maul rogue in trial (5,7)
21 Nonconformists in a mob shine out (9)
23 A little charming shack alongside English channel (5)
24 Men controlling union seen rioting in Spanish city (7)
25 They take a lot of interest as drug addicts outside university start to rave (7)
26 Unusual panic about onset of Covid-19 (6)
27 Row after club bowler becomes more mouthy (8)

Down

1 Yes, parking found in clean secluded track (6)
2 Journeyed to catch husband and mistress finally in Greek city (6)
3 What one might get during happy hour for unfair remark (5,4)
4 Chap overwhelmed by beer after dope - time to get boss (7,7)
6 No ordinary colour spectrum (5)
7 Examines face of patient bitten by bugs (8)
8 Sad at heart, secures drug to get fix again (8)
9 Chum is at rave, drinking still? That was expected, according to me! (1,7,2,4)
15 Worthless American involved in deception, upset by poll (2-7)
16 Indecent drunkard endlessly consuming cocaine near seedy bar (8)
17 Hear opium's fantastic, leaving many in bliss (8)
19 Bones throb recurrently? That's about right (6)
20 Readjust switches to tackle a tricky problem (6)
22 Wild alcoholic in a motel knocking back drinks (5)

SUDOKU

		3		6				
8							3	1
1		4	5			7		
				7			9	5
		7		2		8		
9	5			8				
		9			8	3		7
2	3							8
				4		5		

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

B	R	A	D	B	U	R	Y		A	D	V	E	R	B
R		U		O		E		B		O		R		L
A	C	T	I	N	I	C		R	I	P	I	E	N	O
S		E		A		O		O		E		M		C
S	L	U	M	P		N	E	A	T	D	R	I	N	K
Y		R		A		N		D				T		A
			B	R	E	A	K	I	N	G	W	I	N	D
S		U		T		I		N		R		C		E
C	O	N	V	E	R	S	A	T	I	O	N			
R		O				S		H		U		G		A
A	S	P	A	R	T	A	M	E			N	O	O	K	S
M		E		I		N		B		D		V		S
B	E	N	E	F	I	C		E	P	I	C	E	N	E
L		E		T		E		A		N		R		S
E	L	D	E	S	T		I	M	A	G	I	N	E	S

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

7	2	8	1	6	4	9	5	3
3	6	5	8	7	9	4	1	2
9	1	4	3	2	5	6	7	8
2	5	1	4	9	8	7	3	6
4	8	9	7	3	6	5	2	1
6	7	3	2	5	1	8	4	9
1	4	7	9	8	3	2	6	5
8	3	6	5	4	2	1	9	7
5	9	2	6	1	7	3	8	4

FAITH

Holi heralds joy, purity

The festival of Holi is significant as it heralds the onset of spring and the end of a bleak winter. Celebrated on the last full moon day of the Hindu Luni solar calendar, the date varies with the lunar cycle. The night before Holi bonfires are lit in a ceremony known as *Holika Dahan*, also called *choti Holi*. People congregate near the fire and sing and dance as symbolically it signifies the victory of good over evil, said Prof. Kumool Abbi in a lecture.

The pure ritual of *Holika Dahan* subsumes all negativity and rancour and heralds joy, purity and gaiety. The ritual is traced back to King Hiranyakaship, father of Prahalad. He was a demonic and egotistical asura who secured boons bestowing special powers to prevent him from being killed. His son remained a steadfast devotee of Vishnu, thereby angering his father, who persecuted him endlessly. Cruelly, Prahalad's aunt Holika tricked him into sitting in a fire with her. While the fire destroyed her, Vishnu, the upholder of dharma, saved Prahalad. Vishnu took the form of Nrisimha and annihilated Hiranyakaship. Thus the ritual bonfire signifies the triumph of good over evil.

The next day, Holi, known as Dhuli, is celebrated with delight and lively colours are sprinkled everywhere. Delicacies such as *gujiya*, *mathri* and *thandai* are served (with *bhang* in certain localities).

ASKUS

Vidya Bala

Q I invest only in mutual funds and not equity shares.
I buy directly from the AMCs' through their websites.
I have three SIPs (systematic investment plans), which are smoothly deducted from my accounts.
I wanted to sell some of the units and I went to the AMCs' websites where I bought directly.
When I clicked on the redemption option, in all three AMCs, it says "your mutual fund units are not redeemable here as they are in demat".
My queries are:
1) Investors like me want to buy directly from an AMC to save on commission but why are the AMCs not giving a redemption option?
Is it wrong to have converted the units into demat?
2) The NSDL sends monthly statements and has an app called SPEEDE. In this app, too, there is an option to enable redemption, but when you click to activate it asks you to contact the DP.
3) When I contacted DP, the answer is – give redemption form physically.
I feel this is an unwanted hassle. In a way, the investment is online, but redemption doesn't happen online the same way without an intermediary.
How to rectify this? Please advise.
DR. HEMAKUMAR

A Your hassle is understandable. But unfortunately, you were not aware of the implications of converting MF units into demat. Let us deal with them one by one.
First, it is neither efficient or necessary to hold mutual fund units in demat unless you want to hold your funds and stocks in one place. Since you have stated you do not have shares, you could have kept your mutual funds in a non-demat form.

Cumbersome exercise
Second, there was no need for you to go to an individual AMC to buy their 'direct' plans. In fact, it is a cumbersome exercise since you need to visit each website for any transaction and keep three logins and so on.

There are now plenty of platforms with good user experience to buy direct plans of MFs.

And, if those do not instil confidence, then there are MF Central (a joint platform by the RTAs) and the mutual fund association MFU (AMFI's MF Utility) platforms to transact online in one place for all your funds.

Third, if you had chosen to demat your units, for whatever reason, you should have made sure you do it with a brokerage platform that offers the facility to buy and redeem direct plan units online.

There are places where you can demat units but not transact online. They serve no purpose in these cases.

The AMCs are right in saying that your units must be sold through the exchange if they are in demat form.

They can process them directly only if it is in a non-demat form.

Two options
You have two options at this point. One option now is for you to move to an online brokerage platform by transferring the demat units. This is a one-time task and easy to handle.

Else, you can convert these back to physical units. Unlike converting physical units into demat, there's no online process for switching demat units back to physical form (rematerialisation) with the NSDL or the CDSL.

You'll need to visit your Depository Participant (DP) in person and submit a physical request.

Expect to fill out a rematerialisation form specific to the RTA (like CAMS/Karvy) handling your mutual fund house. This process, according to media reports, typically takes two-four weeks to complete.

(The writer is Co-founder, PrimeInvestor.in)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Barometer of performance: While there may be many parameters for categorising companies, market cap is popular. PTI

Market capitalisation of stocks and what it means

Market capitalisation is the total value all shareholders have assigned to a firm listed on the stock exchange; it is computed by multiplying the market price of a share with outstanding shares

VALUING FIRMS

Joydeep Sen

> You need to look at the allocation to small- and mid-caps in your portfolio and re-evaluate, in light of the current stretched valuation levels

> Consultation with your advisor/mutual fund distributor would be useful; do-it-yourself (DIY) investors would have to gauge it for themselves

You would be hearing a lot, about the run-up in prices of small and mid-cap equities and the stress test the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) asked Mutual Funds to conduct on small and mid-cap funds. This article will help you make sense of what is happening.

Market capitalisation is the total value all shareholders have assigned to a firm listed on the stock exchange. It is computed by multiplying the market price of a share with outstanding shares.

As an illustration, the market price of MRF Ltd. is about ₹1,40,400, subject to daily fluctuations. This does not mean MRF is the most valuable stock in the country; it is the priciest.

MRF's market capitalisation stood at ₹46,200 crore in December 2023, which had risen in March, along with rise in stock price. The most valuable firm in the market viz. the one with the highest market cap is Reliance Industries.

"The market cap of Reliance was ₹16.4 lakh crore in December, which had risen in March, along with a rise in stock price. This shows the contrast between the firm with the highest market cap and the priciest stock. When the number of shares issued by the firm is relatively on the lower side, the value tends to get distributed, pushing up the stock price.

Relevance of concept
While there may be many parameters for categorising firms, market cap is popular. As the size of a business grows, the market assigns a higher value. That is referred to as large cap in the market. When the size of a business is small, only a limited number of stockholders are interested in it and the value is relatively lower. That is referred to as small-cap stock. In between, there are mid-cap stocks. Now the question is, what is the definition of large- or small-cap stocks. Equity analysts/fund managers have estimates and assume a number, beyond which the company is classified as a large-cap or mid-cap.

For categorisation, there is a definition from SEBI that is applicable to mutual funds but can be taken as a proxy for the entire market. The definition counts the top 100 listed stocks, as per market cap, as large-cap stocks.

The next 150 i.e. from stock number 101 to 250, are categorised as mid-cap. Beyond this, all stocks are classified as small-cap.

To give you a perspective, the stock ranking number 100 (border line of large- and mid-cap) as on December 2023 had a market cap of ₹67,000 crore. The one ranking 250 (border line of mid- and small-cap) had a market cap of ₹22,000 crore.

As per market terminology, there is another category viz. micro-cap. Firms that are small and vulnerable, which can be gauged from the relatively lower value assigned by the market, are referred to as micro. The implication is large-cap stocks are well discovered by market participants, the business is stable, upside scope i.e. market price moving up is there, but only so much, as the business is already tracked by a large section of the market.

Higher risk
On the other hand, in small-cap stocks, the potential for the firm to grow and along with it, the stock price, is relatively higher. However, the risk is also higher as the firm is yet to gather critical mass and the vulnerability to business failure is relatively higher. Stock-market performance shows over a long period of time, small-cap funds offered by the Mutual Fund industry has delivered returns higher than large-cap funds. However, the volatility, as measured by the standard deviation of the returns, is higher in small-cap funds.

The implication is you should have some allocation for small-cap stocks/funds in your portfolio.

However, it should not be a major allocation of equity component of the portfolio. Over the last one year, small-cap stocks performed significantly better. While this is good for investors, volatility risk is even higher now at these levels.

At this juncture, SEBI asked mutual funds to hold stress tests on small- and mid-cap funds. MFs declared how many days it would take them, if need be, to liquidate 25% and 50% of the portfolio.

You need not take any action based on this – the fund that would take a longer time to liquidate is not necessarily that bad.

You need to look at the allocation to small- and mid-caps in your portfolio and re-evaluate, in light of the current stretched valuation levels. Consultation with your advisor/MF distributor would be useful. DIY investors would have to gauge it for themselves.

(The writer is a corporate trainer (financial markets) and author)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	10.50 onwards	10,747 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to Rs 4,999
Tata Capital	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 5.5%
State Bank of India	11.15-15.30	10,909-11,974	2,182-2,395	NIL
ICICI Bank	10.80 onwards	10,821 onwards	2,164 onwards	Up to 2.50%
Bank of Baroda	11.05-18.75	10,884-12,902	2,177-2,580	Up to 2% (min Rs 1,000 and max Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3%
Bank of India	10.75-14.75	10,809-11,829	2,162-2,366	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 5,000)
Canara Bank	10.95-16.40	10,859-12,266	2,172-2,453	0.50% (Maximum Rs 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	10.40-17.95	10,772-12,683	2,144-2,537	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	9.99-16.00	10,621-12,159	2,124-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.49 onwards	10,994 onwards	2,199 onwards	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.35-15.45	10,959-12,013	2,192-2,403	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	10.75-13.50	10,809-11,505	2,162-2,301	Up to 1%
South Indian Bank	12.85-20.60	11,338-13,414	2,268-2,683	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	12.45-12.85	11,236-11,338	2,247-2,268	Nil
IDFC First Bank	10.75 onwards	10,809 onwards	2,162 onwards	Up to 3.5%
Bank of Maharashtra	10.00-12.80	10,624-11,325	2,125-2,265	1% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Karnataka Bank	13.43	11,487	2,297	Up to 2% of loan amount (Min. Rs 2,500 & Max. Rs 8,500)
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5%

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	8.70 - 10.45	10,307 - 10,735	Rs 1,000
Punjab National Bank	8.75 - 10.60	10,319 - 10,772	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	8.75 - 12.10	10,319 - 11,148	Up to Rs 2,000
Canara Bank	8.70 - 12.70	10,307 - 11,300	0.25% (Rs. 500 - Rs. 2,500)
UCO Bank	8.45 - 10.55	10,246 - 10,759	Nil
State Bank of India	8.75 - 9.80	10,319 - 10,554	Up to Rs 1,500
IDBI Bank	8.80 - 9.60	10,331 - 10,525	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	8.70 - 13.00	10,307 - 11,377	Nil
Indian Overseas Bank**	8.85 - 12.00	10,343 - 11,122	0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
ICICI Bank	9.00 onwards	10,379 onwards	Rs 999 - Rs 8,500
HDFC Bank	9.20 onwards	10,428 onwards	0.50% (Rs 3,500 - Rs 8,000)
Karnataka Bank	8.88 - 11.36	10,350 - 10,961	0.60% (Rs 3,000 - Rs 11,000)
Federal Bank	8.85 onwards	10,343 onwards	Rs 2,000 - Rs 4,500
Punjab and Sind Bank***	8.85 - 10.25	10,343 - 10,685	0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 15,000)
South Indian Bank	8.75 onwards	10,319 onwards	1% (Max: Rs 10,000)
City Union Bank	14.45 - 14.95	11,751 - 11,882	1.25% (Min: Rs 1,000)

*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holders
**0.50% interest rate concession to borrowers with credit scores of 750 and above. Interest rate concession of 0.20% to borrowers for financing Electric 4 Wheelers. 0.20% concession to existing Housing Loan Borrowers
***Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam

Rates and charges as on March 20 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

Turn a new page in FY24-25

COVERNOTE

Now that 2023-24 and its investment logistics are behind us, get going with the following, right at the beginning of a fresh new year

K. Nitya Kalyani

Now that you have invested, saved and paid your taxes, let's see how you start early for the next financial year.

It's a good practice to invest the maximum in your Public Provident Fund (PPF) in one shot on the first bank working day of April.

Icing on the cake
This way, the investment earns interest for the entire year. It gives about the best returns among tax-saving instruments and compound interest is the icing on the cake.

But the real advantage in this is to peg the investment target date so that you are prepared ahead of time. If you are starting a new investment, say a life insurance policy, let the renewal be on your birthday or that of one of your family members.

Or on the wedding day. Hard to forget (for your own good!) and a clear date to plan for.

Going back to the previous instalment of CoverNote on how to cross over to the new regime, you have to start thinking of all such investments on their own merits.

Life insurance, health insurance, ELSS, tax-saving fixed deposits or the palette of small-savings schemes, each has its relative position in the returns matrix, and viewing them for what they are minus the tax saving is important.

One-time commitment
Remember to start considering them as one-time vs. repetitive commitments.

You can buy fresh national savings certificates for the next few years and stop and walk away if the tax-break is withdrawn. But if you commit now to a life policy with long-term premium payments, you will not get tax breaks when the system changes and this is a commitment you can't abandon!

The life policy is valuable IF you have thought it through for what it offers.

Or, you could have bought a single premium policy. Or, maybe some other investment entirely. It's like committing to a recurring deposit thinking it's a fixed deposit.

Health insurance is also going to lose its tax benefits. It is costly today, and is getting costlier and the loss of the tax-break will be a difficult blow to take.

On the flip side, Section 80 also offers tax breaks on donations to specified charities. If 80G goes, please don't withhold future donations. There are always those who need a helping hand and causes that need to be upheld.

In the reckoning of a life well lived, what you give away is what you truly keep in your credit.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

DAKAR

Senegal votes in a tightly contested presidential race after major unrest

AFP

Voting opened in Senegal on Sunday in a delayed presidential election taking place against a turbulent political backdrop that has triggered violent anti-government protests and boosted support for the Opposition. There are 19 contenders vying to replace President Macky Sall, who is stepping down after a second term. REUTERS

ABUJA

137 schoolchildren in Nigeria's north freed after weeks in captivity

AP

At least 137 of nearly 300 Nigerian children abducted more than two weeks ago from their school in the northwestern state of Kaduna in Nigeria were released on Sunday, the nation's military said. Gunmen had invaded the Kuriga school on March 7 and marched the children into the forests before security forces could arrive. AP

MOGADISHU

16 arrested for attack on hotel in Somalia capital Mogadishu

REUTERS

Somalia's intelligence agency said 16 suspects had been arrested over a deadly attack on a popular hotel in the capital Mogadishu 10 days ago. Three people were killed after Al-Shabaab jihadists stormed the SYL hotel near the highly fortified presidential palace compound on March 14, leading to a siege of over 13 hours. AFP

ATHLONE

Simon Harris set to be Ireland PM after appointed party leader

AFP

Ireland is poised to get its youngest-ever premier next month after 37-year-old Simon Harris secured the leadership of the Fine Gael party on Sunday, replacing Leo Varadkar who announced his surprise resignation last week. Mr. Harris is expected to be formally elected premier in the Irish Parliament in early April. AP

Poland scrambles F-16s amid Russia's air strikes on Ukraine

Warsaw demands an explanation from Moscow after a Russian missile entered its air space; Polish Defence Minister Kosiniak-Kamysz says he is monitoring the ongoing attack on Ukraine

Associated Press
KYIV

Poland demanded an explanation from Russia on Sunday after one of its missiles strayed briefly into Polish airspace during a massive missile attack on Ukraine, prompting the NATO member to activate F-16 fighter jets.

The incident came as Russia launched its third massive missile attack on Ukraine in the past four days, and the second to target the capital of Kyiv.

The head of Kyiv's military administration, Serhiy Popko, said Russia used cruise missiles launched from Tu-95MS strategic bombers. An air alert in the capital lasted for more than two hours as rockets entered Kyiv in groups from the north. He said the attacks were launched from the Engels district in the Saratov region of Russia. According to preliminary data, there were no casualties or damage in the capital, he said.

Police officers inspect a part of a Russian Kh-55 cruise missile, intercepted during a missile strike, in Kyiv on Sunday. REUTERS

Armed Forces Operational Command of Poland, a member of NATO, said in a statement that there was a violation of Polish airspace at 4.23 a.m. (0323GMT) by one of the cruise missiles launched by Russia against towns in western Ukraine.

The object entered near Oserdów, a village in an agricultural region near the border with Ukraine, and stayed there for 39 seconds, the statement said.

Situation monitored

Poland's Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz later told pressperson in a televised news conference that the Russian missile would have been shot down had there been any indication that it was heading towards a target in Poland.

He said that Polish authorities monitored the attack on Ukraine and was in contact with Ukrainian counterparts. Polish and NATO F-16s were activated as part of the strategic response.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, there have been a number of intrusions into Polish airspace.

Ukraine says it struck two Russian ships near Crimea

Reuters
KYIV

The Ukrainian military said it hit two large Russian landing ships in attacks on the annexed Crimean peninsula early on Sunday, as well as a communications centre and other infrastructure used by the Russian Navy in the Black Sea.

The statement did not say how it hit the targets, but a Moscow-installed official in the region reported a major Ukrainian air attack and said air defences had shot down more than 10 missiles over the Crimean port of Sevastopol.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Russian-installed governor of Sevastopol, said on the Telegram messaging app that transport infrastructure including passenger boats and buses were partially damaged in the overnight attacks.

Israel besieges hospitals in Gaza, demands evacuations

Reuters
CAIRO

Israeli forces besieged two more Gaza hospitals on Sunday, pinning down medical teams under heavy gunfire, the Palestinian Red Crescent said, and Israel said it had captured 480 militants in continued clashes at Gaza's main Al Shifa hospital.

Israeli forces say hospitals in the Palestinian enclave where war has been raging for over five months have frequently been used as strongholds of Hamas militants harbouring bases and weapons. Hamas and medical staff deny this.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said one of its staff was killed when Israeli tanks suddenly pushed back into areas around Al-Amal and Nasser hospitals in the southern city of Khan Younis, amid heavy bombardment and gunfire.

Palestinians check the rubble of a building destroyed in Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. GETTY IMAGES

Israeli armoured forces sealed off Al-Amal Hospital and carried out extensive bulldozing operations in its vicinity, the Red Crescent said in a statement, adding: "All of our teams are in extreme danger at the moment and are completely immobilised."

It said Israeli forces were now demanding the complete evacuation of staff, patients and displaced people from Al-Amal's premises and were firing smoke bombs into the area to try to force out its occupants.

A displaced Palestinian was killed inside the hospital compound after being hit in the head by Israeli fire, the Red Crescent said in an update later in the day.

The Israeli military said its forces were hitting "infrastructure" in Khan Younis used as lairs for numerous militants. Hamas denies using hospitals for military ends and accuses Israel of war crimes against civilian targets.

Sirisena to be quizzed over Easter bombings

Press Trust of India
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's former President Maithripala Sirisena will face police questioning on Monday on his recent remarks on the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bombings that he was "aware" of the masterminds of the attacks that killed 270 people, including 11 Indians.

Mr. Sirisena, 72, was President between 2015 January and 2019 November. He had previously denied any knowledge of the attacks.

Police chief Deshabandu Tennakoon told reporters on Sunday that Mr. Sirisena's statement would be recorded on Monday.

Speaking in the central town of Kandy on Wednesday, Mr. Sirisena said he was aware of the masterminds of the attacks.

On April 21, 2019, nine suicide bombers belonging to the local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in Sri Lanka.

U.S., Israel intel chiefs leave Qatar after talks on Gaza truce and hostage release

Agence France-Presse
DOHA

U.S. intelligence chief Bill Burns and his Israeli counterpart David Barnea left Qatar late on Saturday following talks on a Gaza truce and hostage release deal, a source briefed on the talks said.

The CIA and Mossad chiefs "departed Doha to brief their respective teams back home on the latest round" of talks, the source said on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the discussions.

"The talks focused on details and a ratio for the exchange of hostages and prisoners", the knowledgeable source added, explaining that "technical teams remain in Doha".

U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators have been engaged in weeks of behind-the-scenes talks in efforts to secure a second truce in the war between Israel and Hamas, and the release of captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners being held in Israeli jails.

U.S., Qatari and Egyptian mediators have been engaged in weeks of talks to secure a truce

Israel had said on Friday that the head of its spy agency was to return to Doha for his second trip in a week after talks were restarted following failed efforts to secure a truce before the Muslim holy month of Ramzan, which began last week.

The war began when Hamas launched an unprecedented attack from Gaza that left about 1,160 dead in Israel, mostly civilians.

Israel's military has waged a retaliatory offensive against Hamas that has killed 32,226 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Palestinian militants seized about 250 Israeli and foreign hostages during the October 7 attack on Israel but close to 130 still remain in Gaza.

U.S. forces engage six Houthi drones

Reuters

U.S. forces engaged six Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over the southern Red Sea after the group launched four antiship ballistic missiles toward a Chinese-owned oil tanker, the U.S. Central Command said on Saturday. Iranian-backed Houthis launched the missiles in the vicinity of *M/V Huang Pu*, a Chinese-owned oil tanker, the Central Command said in a post on X.

A fifth missile was fired toward the oil tanker,

Houthis launched the missiles near a Chinese-owned oil tanker

which issued a distress call, the Central Command said, adding that no casualties were reported in the incident and a fire on board was extinguished.

U.S. forces then engaged six UAVs, five of which crashed into the Red Sea, and one flew inland into Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, the CentCom said.

Sport

Sainz returns from appendicitis surgery to win; Verstappen retires

AUSTRALIAN GP

Reuters
MELBOURNE

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz won the Australian Grand Prix on Sunday in a triumphant return two weeks after appendicitis surgery as Red Bull's world champion Max Verstappen suffered his first retirement in two years.

Sainz held off team mate Charles Leclerc before a final-lap crash by Mercedes driver George Russell triggered a virtual safety car and eased the Spaniard's path to victory.

Lando Norris was third for McLaren, thwarting his team mate Oscar Piastri's hopes of grabbing a first podium by an Australian driver at the F1 race.

Back with a bang! Sainz held off team mate Charles Leclerc to take top spot. GETTY IMAGES

Verstappen started on pole for the third time this season but retired on the fourth lap with a brake problem as flames leaped out of the right rear of his car. Seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton was also forced to retire early with a power unit problem after starting 11th on the grid following his worst Melbourne qualifying since 2010.

The results (provisional): 1. Sainz (Ferrari) 1hr 20min 26.843sec, 2. Leclerc (Ferrari) +2.366, 3. Norris (McLaren) +5.904, 4. Piastri (McLaren) 35.770, 5. Perez (Red Bull) 56.309, 6. Stroll (Aston Martin) 1:33.222, 7. Tsunoda (RB) 1:35.601, 8. Alonso (Aston Martin) 1:40.992, 9. Hulkenberg (Haas) 1:44.553, 10. Magnussen (Haas) at 1 lap, 11. Albon (Williams) at 1 lap, 12. Ricciardo (RB) 1 lap, 13. Gasly (Alpine) 1 lap, 14. Bottas (Sauber) 1 lap, 15. Guanyu (Sauber) 1 lap, 16. Ocon (Alpine) at 1 lap, 17. Russell (Mercedes) at 3 laps.

DNF: Lap 4: Max Verstappen (Red Bull); Lap 16: Hamilton (Mercedes).

National Camp 'A' teams clinch titles

Sports Bureau

The star-studded National Camp 'A' team, comprising national record-holder Muhammed Anas, Muhammed Ajmal, Arokia Rajiv and Noah Nirmal Tom, won the men's 4x400m title in the first National Open Relay Carnival in Chandigarh on Sunday.

National Camp 'A', which had two members of the Indian team which finished fifth at last year's Budapest World Championships and the country's fastest quarter-miler this season Noah, clocked 3:05.71. The National Camp 'B', which included Amoj Jacob who was also a part of the team at the last Worlds, finished second.

Meanwhile, Rupal Chaudhary anchored the National Camp 'A' to the women's 4x400m title.

Double delight: The National Camp 'A' sides which won the women's and men's Relay Open titles.

The side, which also included Vithya Ramraj, M.R. Poovamma and Dandi Sri, beat National Camp 'B' by over five seconds.

The results (relays):
Men: 4x100m: 1. Reliance (Lalu Prasad Bhoi, Animesh Kujur, Aryan Ekka, A. Dalabehera) 40.62s, 2. Punjab 41.19, 3. Air Force 41.48.
4x400m: 1. National Camp 'A' (Arokia Rajiv, Muhammed Ajmal, Muhammed Anas Yahiya, Noah Nirmal Tom) 3:05.71s, 2. National Camp 'B' 3:06.82, 3. Army 3:09.92.
Women: 4x100m: 1. Reliance (Sukhi Baskey, Bonita Lakra, Sabita Toppo, P. Sahu) 46.89s, 2. Uttar Pradesh 51.08.
4x400m: 1. National Camp 'A' (Vithya Ramraj, M.R. Poovamma, Dandi Sri, Rupal Chaudhary) 3:28.64s, 2. National Camp 'B' 3:33.71, 3. Reliance 3:46.71.
Mixed 4x400m: 1. National Camp 'A' (Noah, Poovamma, Muhammed Anas, Vithyaj) 3:17.37s, 2. National Camp 'B' 3:17.77, 3. National Camp 'C' 3:22.20.
Under-20: Men: 4x100m: 1. Junior Camp 'A' (Vallipi, S. Karthikeyan, Mahendra Santa, D. Jayaram) 40.65s, 2. Reliance 42.28, 3. Telangana 42.50.
4x400m: 1. Junior Camp 'A' (P. Abiram, Navpreet Singh, Aman Chaudhary, Bapi Hansda) 3:11.92s, 2. Junior Camp 'B' (Munna Kumar, Nikhil Suhas, Saket Minj, Sahil Malik) 3:13.76, 3. Tamil Nadu 3:20.17.
Women: 4x100m: 1. Junior Camp 'A' (R. Amol Bhonsle, Neole Cornelio, Abinaya Rajarajan, Sakshi Chavan) 45.81s, 2. Junior Camp 'B' 46.81, 3. Punjab 51.60.
4x400m: 1. Junior Camp 'A' (Anuksha Kumbhar, M. Kanista, J. Jegadish, D. Sangeetha) 3:41.35s, 2. Junior Camp 'B' 3:41.40, 3. Delhi 3:56.41. **Mixed 4x400m:** 1. Junior Camp 'A' (Aman Chaudhary, Anushka Kumbhar, Bapi Hansda, D. Sangeetha) 3:26.36s, 2. Junior Camp 'B' 3:29.67, 3. Tamil Nadu 3:35.33.

STARTING TROUBLE

Mumbai Indians loses its IPL season opener yet again

VIJAY SONEJI

Mumbai Indians couldn't break the streak of losing IPL season openers as it went down to Gujarat Titans by six runs in a humdinger in Ahmedabad on Sunday. MI last won its season opener in 2012 when it beat Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai.

SILVER LINING

Porel's knock a big positive for Capitals, says asst. coach Amre

R.V. MOORTHY

Delhi Capitals' campaign was not off to the best of starts as it went down to Punjab Kings by four wickets. However, Abhishek Porel's scintillating cameo was a big positive, says DC assistant coach Pravin Amre. "We can also see the positive about Porel, the guy came in and scored runs at a strike rate of more than 300."

GEM IS BACK

It's just a matter of time before Pant regains form, feels Sidhu

R.V. MOORTHY

Former India opener Navjot Sidhu is confident that it is just a "matter of time" before Rishabh Pant returns to form. "He is playing good cricket and it's just a matter of time before he regains his form. More importantly, Indian cricket has got its gem back and we should be happy that he has returned to the field," said Sidhu.

REPRIMANDED

Rana fined 60% of match fee for violating IPL code of conduct

K.R. DEEPAK

KKR pacer Harshit Rana, who bowled a match-winning final over, was fined 60% of his match fee for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Kolkata on Saturday. According to a statement, Rana breached the rules under Article 2.5 of the IPL Code of Conduct.

Titans keep their nerve, MI loses its poise and the plot

Sai Sudharsan guides the home team to a respectable total despite Bumrah's brilliant spell of three for 14; Hardik's men undergo a scarcely believable downturn to crash to a six-run defeat

IPL-17

N. Sudarshan
AHMEDABAD

Shubman Gill passed his first captaincy test as Gujarat Titans eked out a nervous six-run win over Mumbai Indians in their Indian Premier League opener at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Sunday.

Pursuing 169, MI was coasting along at 107 for two after 12 overs. But Sai Kishore trapping Rohit Sharma (43, 29b, 7x4, 1x6) leg-before and Mohit Sharma sending back Dewald Brevis (46, 38b, 2x4, 3x6) and Tim David triggered a scarcely believable downturn.

It wasn't as if there was no life left in MI. When 27 runs were needed from 12 balls, Tilak Varma sent Spencer Johnson soaring over long-on to raise hopes only for the left-armer to account for both Tilak and Gerald Coetzee the same over.

With 19 needed from six, Hardik Pandya – who was mildly booed on the day by the 80,000-strong crowd – appeared to have turned the tie when he smashed Umesh Yadav for a six and a four. But he holed out to long-on off the next ball to effectively hand GT the win.

Earlier, Jasprit Bumrah's sensational return to IPL (3/14) had ensured that GT would end up with only a moderately challenging score. He prised out Wriddhiman Saha (19, 15b, 4x4) with a splendid yorker; foxed David Miller with a slower delivery before sending back the set B. Sai Sudharsan (45, 39b, 3x4, 1x6).

But a blazing start from Saha and Gill (31, 22b, 3x4, 1x6), some middle-order consolidation from Azmatullah Omarzai and Sai Sudharsan and an end-overs flourish from Rahul Tewatia (22, 15b, 2x4, 1x6) kept GT in the hunt.

There was a time when GT seemed set to finish with an under-par total as Sai Sudharsan couldn't accelerate, Miller was dismissed and the side was reduced to 134 for five. With not many boundaries, it was a canine intruder that held up play for nearly five minutes in the 14th over that received the loudest cheers.

But Tewatia ensured it was not all gloom, caning left-arm pacer Luke Wood for a six and two fours in the 18th over.

A stunning diving catch in the deep from Naman Dhir sent him back but not before the southpaw had done his job.

Pulling together: Titans applied pressure by picking wickets at crucial junctures to derail Mumbai Indians' chase after Sai Sudharsan's valuable knock. VIJAY SONEJI

SCOREBOARD

GUJARAT TITANS
Wriddhiman Saha b Bumrah 19 *(15b, 4x4)*, Shubman Gill c Rohit b Chawla 31 *(22b, 3x4, 1x6)*, B. Sai Sudharsan c Tilak b Bumrah 45 *(39b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Azmatullah Omarzai c Tilak b Coetzee 17 *(11b, 1x4, 1x6)*, David Miller c Hardik b Bumrah 12 *(11b, 1x4)*, Vijay Shankar (not out) 6 *(5b)*, Rahul Tewatia c Dhir b Coetzee 22 *(15b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Rashid Khan (not out) 4 *(3b)*; Extras (lb-4, nb-1, w-7): 12; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 168.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-31 (Saha, 3.6 overs), 2-64 (Gill, 7.4), 3-104 (Omarzai, 11.6), 4-133 (Miller, 16.1), 5-134 (Sai Sudharsan, 16.3), 6-161 (Tewatia, 19.1).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING
Hardik 3-0-30-0, Luke Wood 2-0-25-0, Bumrah 4-0-14-3, Mulani 3-0-24-0, Chawla 3-0-31-1, Dhir 1-0-13-0, Coetzee 4-0-27-2.

MUMBAI INDIANS
Ishan Kishan c Saha b Omarzai 0 *(4b)*, Rohit Sharma lbw b Sai Kishore 43 *(29b, 7x4, 1x6)*, Naman Dhir lbw b Omarzai 20 *(10b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Dewald Brevis (**Impact Player in place of Wood**) c & b Mohit 46 *(38b, 2x4, 3x6)*, Tilak Varma c sub (Abhinav) b Johnson 25 *(19b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Tim David c Miller b Mohit 11 *(10b, 1x4)*, Hardik Pandya c Tewatia b Umesh 11 *(4b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Gerald Coetzee c & b Johnson 1 *(3b)*, Shams Mulani (not out) 1 *(1b)*, Piyush Chawla c Rashid b Umesh 0 *(1b)*, Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 1 *(1b)*; Extras (w-3): 3; Total (for nine wkts. in 20 overs): 162.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-0 (Kishan, 0.4), 2-30 (Dhir, 2.6), 3-107 (Rohit, 12.1), 4-129 (Brevis, 15.5), 5-142 (David, 17.6), 6-148 (Tilak, 18.2), 7-150 (Coetzee, 18.6), 8-160 (Hardik, 19.3), 9-160 (Chawla, 19.4).

TITANS BOWLING
Omarzai 3-0-27-2, Umesh 3-0-31-2, Rashid 4-0-23-0, Sai Kishore 4-0-24-1, Johnson 2-0-25-2, Mohit (**Impact Player in place of Sai Sudharsan**) 4-0-32-2.

Toss: MI.
PoM: Sai Sudharsan.
GT won by six runs.

Next assignment

GT: March 26 vs. **CSK**
Chennai, 7.30 p.m.

MI: March 27 vs. **SRH**
Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.

RR rides on Samson's rousing innings to subdue LSG

P.K. Ajith Kumar
JAIPUR

When Rajasthan Royals lost its star openers by the fifth over, the dressing room may not have got fidgety. Sanju Samson was still there, after all. And he has this nice habit of beginning the IPL with an excellent innings.

The skipper's unbeaten 82 (52b, 3x4, 6x6) proved good enough in the end for Royals to start their campaign in the IPL's Season 17 on a winning note.

The host, which made 193 for four after winning the toss, defeated Lucknow Super Giants by 20 runs at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium on Sunday. This was Samson's fifth consecutive fifty-plus score in his first match of an IPL season since 2020.

The track was a challenging one, and his team needed Samson to hold the innings together after the loss of Jos Buttler and then Yashasvi Jaiswal.

The in-form India opener (24, 12b, 3x4, 1x6) fell to a Mohsin Khan bouncer. He could not get hold of his pull shot and gave a skier to mid-on.

Buttler had already been back in the dugout, falling to a superb low catch behind the stumps by K.L. Rahul off Naveen-ul-Haq. Samson reached the middle after that dismissal, off the last ball of the second over, and he stayed there till the end of the innings.

Giving him company was Riyan Parag who made most of his promotion to No. 4 – his stunning form in domestic cricket as well as some good fortune – to hit 43 (29b, 1x4, 3x6).

Parag added 93 for the third wicket with Samson, who paced his innings beautifully, while playing those handsome strokes of his.

Not the best of starts

Chasing a daunting target, LSG didn't get the best of starts, as Trent Boult sent back Quinton de Kock and Devdutt Padikkal in his first two overs. When Impact Player Deepak Hooda (26, 13b, 2x4, 2x6) was dismissed by Yuzvendra Chahal, the visitors slid to 60 for four.

But Rahul (58, 44b, 4x4, 2x6) and Nicholas Pooran (64 n.o. 41b, 4x4, 4x6) brought them back into the match with their 85-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

Sandeep Sharma accounted for Rahul and his death bowling ensured there was no second life for LSG.

Next assignment

RR: March 28 vs. **DC**
Jaipur, 7.30 p.m.

LSG: March 30 vs. **PBKS**
Lucknow, 7.30 p.m.

Packing a punch: Samson's innings was interspersed with his trademark strokes. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

SCOREBOARD

RAJASTHAN ROYALS
Yashasvi Jaiswal c Krunal b Mohsin 24 *(12b, 3x4, 1x6)*, Jos Buttler c Rahul b Naveen 11 *(9b, 2x4)*, Sanju Samson (not out) 82 *(52b, 3x4, 6x6)*, Riyan Parag c sub (Hooda) b Naveen 43 *(29b, 1x4, 3x6)*, Shimron Hetmyer c Rahul b Bishnoi 5 *(7b)*, Dhruv Jurel (not out) 20 *(12b, 1x4, 1x6)*; Extras (lb-1, w-6, nb-1): 8; Total (for four wkts. in 20 overs): 193.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-13 (Buttler, 1.6 overs), 2-49 (Jaiswal, 4.6), 3-142 (Parag, 14.5), 4-150 (Hetmyer, 16.3).

SUPER GIANTS BOWLING
Mohsin 4-0-45-1, Naveen 4-0-41-2, Krunal 4-0-19-0, Bishnoi 4-0-38-1, Yash Thakur 3-0-43-0, Badoni 1-0-6-0.

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS
Quinton de Kock c Burger b Boult 4 *(5b, 1x4)*, K.L. Rahul c Jurel b Sandeep 58 *(44b, 4x4, 2x6)*, Devdutt Padikkal b Boult 0 *(3b)*, Ayush Badoni c Buttler b Burger 1 *(5b)*, Deepak Hooda (**Impact Player in place of Yash**) c Jurel b Chahal 26 *(13b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Nicholas Pooran (not out) 64 *(41b, 4x4, 4x6)*, Marcus Stoinis c Jurel b Ashwin 3 *(4b)*, Krunal Pandya (not out) 3 *(5b)*; Extras (lb-5, w-9): 14; Total (for six wkts. in 20 overs): 173.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-4 (de Kock, 0.5), 2-10 (Padikkal, 2.2), 3-11 (Badoni, 3.1), 4-60 (Hooda, 7.3), 5-145 (Rahul, 16.1), 6-154 (Stoinis, 17.3).

ROYALS BOWLING
Boult 4-0-35-2, Burger (**Impact Player in place of Hetmyer**) 3-0-30-1, Ashwin 4-0-35-1, Avesh 3-0-21-0, Chahal 3-0-25-1, Sandeep 3-0-22-1.

Toss: Royals.
PoM: Samson.
Royals won by 20 runs.

All praise for Russell and Ramandeep's contributions

Good beginning: Salt said the debutant Ramandeep took the pressure off him and set a platform for Russell. K.R. DEEPAK

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad camps acknowledged Andre Russell's special performance, which enabled the host to manage a narrow four-run win in the IPL at the Eden Gardens on Saturday night.

KKR opener Phil Salt said Russell's onslaught was nothing new for him. "I've played with Dre in the Hundred. He's a phenomenal ball striker. The best in the world on his day. To see him do what he did, obviously is incredible. Love watching it, but it's no surprise to me," said Salt.

SRH coach Daniel Vettori had similar opinions. "His power is second to none, so you have to challenge yourself on being perfect with the execution."

Both Salt and Vettori were impressed with Ramandeep Singh, whose cameo on debut put KKR back on track.

"Ramandeep took the pressure off me. He had a hell of a cameo and we started to put a partnership," said Salt. Vettori said Ramandeep set a platform for Russell. "With Salt well set, it allowed him (Ramandeep) to play his game."

Vettori said that with Heinrich Klaasen in SRH never lost hope in the chase. Salt praised young pacer Harshit Rana for holding his nerve in the crucial final over and helping KKR defend its total.

INBRIEF

Dhananjaya, Kamindu slam their second ton of a Test

Dhananjaya de Silva and Kamindu Mendis both slammed their second century of the match as Sri Lanka set a 511-run target for Bangladesh before pushing the host to the corner in the first Test at Sylhet on Sunday. The visitor was all out for 418 in its second innings, with Mendis making 164 to go with his 102 in the first innings and de Silva, who also scored 102 in the first essay, adding 108. Sri Lankan pacers reduced Bangladesh to 47 for five at stumps.

The scores: Sri Lanka 280 & 418/10 in 110.4 overs (Karunaratne 52, Dhananjaya de Silva 108, Kamindu Mendis 164, Mehidy Hasan Miraz 4/74) vs Bangladesh 188 & 47/5 in 13 overs (Vishwa Fernando 3/13).

Austria's Baumgartner scores fastest international goal

Austria's Christoph Baumgartner scored six seconds after kickoff in Saturday's 2-0 friendly win over host Slovakia in Bratislava, the fastest recorded goal in international football. The 24-year-old sprinted from the centre circle and skipped past three challenges before firing a low shot from outside the box into the bottom corner. The goal was one second faster than Lukas Podolski's strike for Germany against Ecuador in 2013.

Gavaskar's 'prototype' bat used in 1979 fetches £8,000

A Duncan Fearnley 'prototype' bat used by Sunil Gavaskar during the second Test against England at Lord's in 1979 fetched £8,000 (about ₹8,42,000) at an auction conducted by Knights, a specialist auctioneer of sporting memorabilia, on Friday. The 'Run Reaper' bat, which had eleven holes to make it lighter, was tested by several cricketers before it was outlawed by the TCCB and the MCC following its use by Gavaskar in the Test where he scored 42 and 59. The bat was in the private collection of the reputed bat manufacturer.

Arjun-Jeevan pair finishes runner-up in Murcia Challenger

Arjun Kadhe and Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan were beaten 7-5, 6-1 by the top seeds Theo Arribage and Victor Cornea in the doubles final of the €74,825 Challenger tennis in Murcia, Spain. The champion team collected $4,250 and 75 ATP points. The Indians won $2,450 and 50 points.

Hockey Haryana women crowned National champions

Hockey Haryana beat Hockey Maharashtra 3-0 in a shoot-out to claim the 14th Hockey India senior women's National championship at Pimpri on Saturday, after both the teams were tied 1-1 at the end of regulation time.

Shravan nets SCB's winner against Sporting Clube de Goa

Shravan Shetty's 29th minute goal helped Sporting Club Bengaluru (SCB) recorded a 1-0 win over Sporting Clube de Goa in an I-League 2 football tournament match at Bangalore Football Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday. Sporting Club Bengaluru (15 points) is second on the points table, one behind leader FC Bengaluru United.

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 7.30 a.m.
Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka: 1st Test, day 4, FanCode, 9.30 a.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 7.30 p.m.

RCB back in familiar setting after loss to CSK

The Bengaluru side, in the first of three successive outings at home, takes on PBKS which enters the contest on a high; another slip will prove fatal for the hosts at the batting-friendly venue

IPL-17

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) will bank on home support to get its IPL 2024 campaign on the right track.

After a loss to Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in Chennai in the opener, RCB will find solace in the familiar setting of the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium.

In the first of three successive outings in Bengaluru, RCB takes on Punjab Kings (PBKS) here on Monday.

At the training session on Sunday, the RCB batters – Faf du Plessis, Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell, Cameron Green and Rajat Patidar – had long stints in the net.

Goal
The goal was to find rhythm after a disappointing night out in Chennai, when a top-order collapse left the side at 78 for five. RCB will be aware that another slip up will prove fatal at this batting-friendly venue.

Silver lining
The silver lining came from Anuj Rawat and Dinesh Karthik, who pulled out the big hits to take RCB to a respectable score.

A well-rounded PBKS bowling attack will make it difficult for RCB.

Turning it around: Royal Challengers' Maxwell will hope to come good after a first-ball duck against Super Kings. K. MURALI KUMAR

A well-rounded Punjab Kings bowling attack will make things difficult for the home side

Faf du Plessis, Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell, Cameron Green and Rajat Patidar have long stints in the net

Vital role
In Arshdeep Singh and Harshal Patel (a former RCB player), PBKS has two fine death bowlers.

Left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar keeps it tight, while Kagiso Rabada offers all-out pace.

The visitor enters the contest on a high, having shut down Delhi Capitals (DC) by four wickets on Saturday.

England all-rounders Sam Curran and Liam Livingstone carried PBKS with the bat, and Arshdeep proved his worth as an impact player with the ball.

Today's match
RCB vs PUNJAB KINGS
Bengaluru, 7.30 P.M.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 31
RCB 14 | PBKS 17
PREVIOUS MEETING
RCB won by 24 runs, 2023
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA

Bring it on! Rawat's knock, while insufficient to see RCB through, proved that he is up for a fight. K. MURALI KUMAR

Rawat hopes to settle into his role as a finisher

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Coming in at six, southpaw Rawat rescued the side with a 25-ball 48 in the company of Dinesh Karthik

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) will take heart from the exploits of Anuj Rawat in its IPL 2024 campaign opener against Chennai Super Kings.

Coming in at six, the southpaw rescued the side with a 25-ball 48 in the company of Dinesh Karthik.

It was not enough to earn a win for RCB, but Rawat's rearguard action proved that he is up for a fight.

Limited succes
The wicketkeeper-batter featured in seven games for RCB last season, with limited success.

This year, he hopes to better settle into his role as a finisher.

"The communication from our team management is clear. I will bat down the order, and if we lose early wickets, then I will bat in the middle-order," Rawat said here on Sunday, on the eve of RCB's fixture against Punjab Kings.

Virat Kohli was slow off the blocks against CSK, at one stage stuck on 11 off 12 balls.

Same game plan
Kohli, eventually dismissed for a 20-ball 21, has no reason to change his game plan, Rawat said.

"We have seen Virat play for so many years; he plays the same way. We cannot say that he batted slow.

He didn't get a chance to face many balls in the Power Play," Rawat said.

Swiss Open: Srikanth makes semifinal exit

Press Trust of India
BASEL

Srikanth. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Indian shuttler K. Srikanth's run at the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament came to an end after a semifinal loss to Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi in Basel on Saturday. He squandered a lead to go down 21-15, 9-21, 18-21.

The match marked Srikanth's first semifinal appearance in 16 months.

After taking the opener, Srikanth took an early 4-1 lead in the second game. However, errors started to creep into his game and Srikanth lost the momentum to go down tamely in the next game with Lin, forcing a decider. Srikanth did get his rhythm back in the decider. The Indian managed to take a slender lead at the interval.

At 16-16, Lin manage to take a three-point lead. Srikanth did mange to cut down his deficit but nerves got the better of him.

Triumphant: Odisha FC topped the seven-team table with 31 points from 12 matches. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Odisha FC lifts maiden IWL title, Gokulam Kerala runner-up

Sports Bureau

Former India u-17 captain Lynda Kom scored a hat-trick while Pyari Xaxa netted twice as Odisha blanked Kickstart 6-0 for its maiden Indian Women's League football title in Bhubaneswar on Sunday.

Odisha topped the seven-team table with 31 points from 12 matches while three-time champion Gokulam Kerala FC, which defeated East Bengal FC 5-1 in Kozhikode, finished runner-up with 29 points. Kickstart (21) was third.

The results: At Bhubaneswar: Odisha FC 6 (Lynda Kom 11, 66 & 77, Pyari Xaxa 13 & 22; Karthika Angamuthu 58) bt Kickstart FC 0.

At Kozhikode: Gokulam Kerala FC 5 (Soumya Guguloth 30 & 48, Sandhiya Ranganathan 34, Fazila Ikwaput 61, Muskan Subba 86) bt East Bengal FC 1 (Sulanjana Raul 64).

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